October/November, 1987/$3.50

The Beaver

EXPLORING · CANADA'S · HISTORY

For KING and COUNTRY: ONE LIFE, ONE DEATH

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"Odds Fish!" the King said. "I'll swear I heard a seal bark!"

Nell Gwynne made a face. It was not true that he never said a foolish thing. It was his own fault for rising so early.

Beyond the door, the Lord Privy Seal cleared his throat a second time.

"And no quips about privies!" Nell warned.

"This morning," the King said, yawning, "we are to seal the charter for the Hudson's Bay adventurers. Cousin Rupert will be waiting."

He swept the dogs off the bed with a regal gesture and began pulling on his silk stockings.

"Another day in the life of Charles the Second," he said.

"Charles the Third," Nell corrected him. Her first king, he was her third Charles.

It was May the second, 1670.

The long life of the Hudson's Bay Company was about to begin.

The Great Fur Opera **— the hilarious spoof of the history of the Hudson's Bay Company written by Kildare Dobbs with illustrations by Ronald Searle — has become a Canadian comedy classic since it was published in 1970, the Honourable Company's 300th anniversary year.** ***The Beaver*** **is now offering a limited number of a special presentation edition at the low price of $19.98 (postage paid) while supplies last. For your copy of** ***The Great Fur Opera*** **send your cheque or money order to** ***The Beaver,*** **450 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0E7.**

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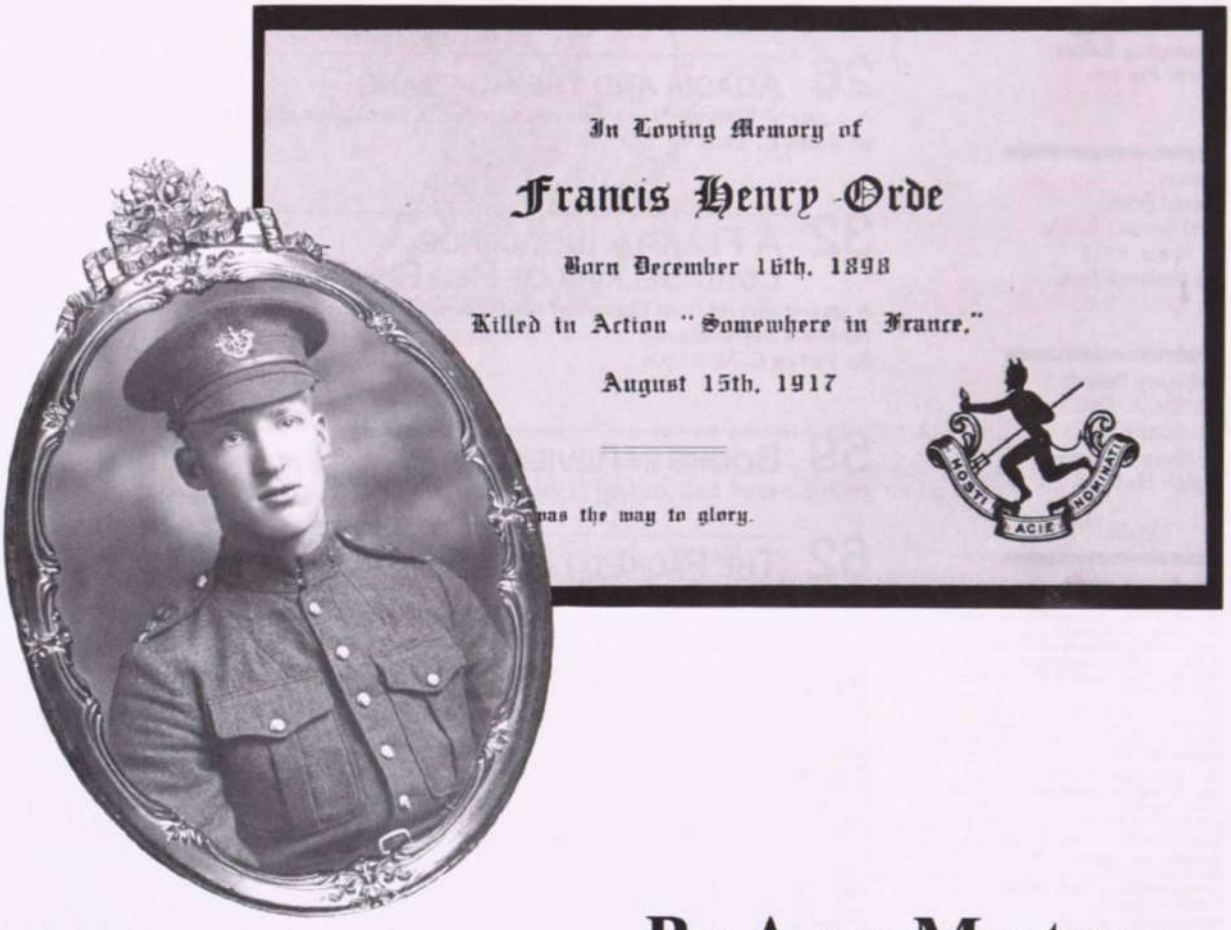
ONE LIFE, ONE DEATH



By Anne Morton

Francis Henry Orde was born in Brandon, Manitoba on 16 December 1898, the son of Frank Orde and his wife Sarah Massender. His father was a locomotive engineer. Harry had two older sisters, Georgina and Dorothy, and a younger sister, Edith, a close companion until her death from scarlet fever in 1910. When Harry was five the family moved to Winnipeg. Two more sisters, Jean and Margaret (Peggy), were born after the move.

A graduate of Kelvin High School, Harry planned to study engineering at the University of Manitoba. He was working in the paymaster's office of Canadian Northern Railways when he enlisted with the 90th Winnipeg Rifles (144th Battalion) in February 1916. In September 1916 the battalion sailed for England. In May 1917 Harry was sent to France. Early in the morning of 15 August 1917, on the first day of the Battle of Hill 70, he was killed in action. He was eighteen years old.

Harry's sister Peggy's only memory of him is that before he left for Halifax he promised that she could have his share of ice cream until he came home again. There still survives an oak chest he made, and made well, at school. It speaks of a boy neat-handed and patient. His name can be seen on memorials from the towering monument at Vimy Ridge to his parent's tombstone in the cemetery of St. John's Cathedral in Winnipeg. But Harry survives mostly in his letters, one of many such collections treasured after the war as paper voices of the dead.

Harry's letters, written from Camp Hughes in Manitoba, from stops on his train journey across Canada, from camps in Surrey, Sussex and Kent, and from France, cover the months of June 1916 to August 1917. How accurately they present him who now can say? He seems to have been an unselfconscious writer, with a gift for writing as he spoke. He is likely to describe his emotional reaction to a person, place or event — his favourite words being "swell" or "rotten" as applicable — rather than things in themselves. So to their original audience, Harry's parents, sisters and paternal grandfather, as to ourselves, his letters gave and still give something of Harry.

As the letters do not begin until some months after he had joined up they do not deal with what was to be the crucial action of his life — his enlistment. Why was he so eager to join up that he lied about his age and why, after his father had hauled him home, did he go back once more to the recruiting office? It may be, of course, that he never considered it necessary or right to speak about his motives. When the Reverend Bertal Heeney, the rector of St. Luke's, his parish church, sent him a letter containing phrases such as "those of us who have been unable to go to the front feel that we owe the unity and salvation of the Empire and the existence of our homes and everything which we hold dear to you and men like you who have gone to fight the enemy of civilization", Harry's response was: "I had a letter from Mr. Heeney which was just like an advertisement. I will bet four shillings he wrote about two hundred exactly the same. I will enclose it for you to read so that you will know what I mean." It is probably the style and the medium he took exception to (he would have won his bet for it is an obvious form letter) rather than the sentiment. The Ordes were not, by and large, a family of flag-wavers. Harry's cousin Teddy, injured terribly in the Halifax explosion as a naval cadet, on occasion sported a glass eye painted with the Union Jack. But he commanded a corvette in the next war all the same.

Harry preferred to describe himself, with the understatement popular at the time, as "doing his bit" and he seems never to have altered his conviction that he was right. Writing from France he says "I'd sooner be a volunteer than a conscript" and, more fiercely: "If the Frenchies in Quebec start anything they ought to turn a few machine guns on them and that would quiet them down 'tout suite' ". Even in calmer days when still in England he could write of an acquaintance of his sister Dorothy's: "Ask Do if Mr. Broadway or whatever his name is has ever tried to join the army or if he is going to. If not he is no good and she can tell him I said so." Usually he jokes about reluctant soldiers, employing the metaphor of "cold feet" with some interesting variations. Friends who have not joined up are said to suffer from "insufficient footwear" and when one joins up at last Harry concludes that he must have got "an extra pair of socks".

One motive behind his joining up that Harry does mention, possibly because he felt burdened by it, is family pride. His father, a much ancestored man, used to say that "you should not be proud of your ancestors, they should be proud of you." The first Orde to come to Canada, Captain George Frederick Orde, Harry's great-grandfather, had been a British army officer, as had his father, Major John Bertram Orde. As a young man in Ontario Harry's grandfather, Francis William Orde, had volunteered to fight the Fenians. Yet another of Harry's great-great grandfathers, Captain Charles Rubidge, had been at Trafalgar with Nelson. When the Empire expected, in other words, the Ordes did their duty. And so Harry, reading in the paper of a relative winning the Victoria Cross, jokes that it is "nothing unusual for an Orde." Glad to hear of his cousin Reg Orde being awarded the Military Cross, he is also a bit rueful as it means he "will have to try for a V.C. to keep up the family reputation." It was the Canadian branch of the family that he was really proud of. Meeting an English relative, Laura Bennett, for the first time, he reports: "She talked of relations,

pedigrees, etc. and I gave her a few facts (or perhaps they were lies) about the Canadian Ordes." He even sent home a clipping from a magazine story because it contained a fictional officer named Orde "which shows our name is known in this country after all."

Another important factor in Harry's decision to join up was the influence of his best friend, Harold Lindsay, a friend who undoubtedly meant much to a boy with no brothers. Harold, according to family lore, could not wait to enlist and Harry felt bound to follow. The two boys managed to share the same quarters during much of their time in the army, eventually winding up in the same platoon in France. They were to die on the same day. Harry almost always writes of Harold with teasing affection, presenting himself as the far more level-headed of the pair. At Camp Hughes Harold is "up before the Colonel . . . for not halting when the sentry challenged him. He was pretty scared but the Colonel only gave him a lecture." In England he is sent back to camp before completing an officer's course and soon after loses his corporal's stripe for being dirty on guard. "He was glad to get broke as it was the only way he would ever get to France for a while." Sent to France in March, Harold is reported as writing "that France is the only place for him and that he wouldn't come back here for anything," to which Harry wryly responds "I suppose he will change his opinion after he has been 'up the line' a few days." The next month Harry writes "I haven't heard from Harold for a long time but I guess he is strafing Huns by the dozens now."

Harry and Harold had joined up with the third overseas battalion of the 90th Winnipeg Rifles (144th Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force). The Royal Winnipeg Rifles (as they have been since 1935) are best known as the "Little Black Devils", a nickname gained at the Battle of Fish Creek in the Northwest Rebellion. "The redcoats we know," the enemy said, seeing the Winnipeggers' dark-green rifle regiment uniforms, "but who are these little black devils?" From the Nile Campaign to the Northwest Rebellion and South Africa and now in the Great War itself, the Little Black Devils were one of Winnipeg's proudest and most dramatic expressions of loyalty to the Empire. In 1915 men of the Rifles had been among the Canadian troops who stood and died during the first poison-gas attack at Gravenstafel Ridge, backing into glory as the soldiers who didn't know how to run away.

At the beginning of his military career Harry was full of conscious pride in the regiment. Promising to collect some Western battalion badges at Camp Hughes for Dorothy, he writes "Some of them have pretty swell badges but they all turn around and stare at the 'Little Black Devils' ". A little later he adds a postscript to a letter written on regimental paper, "What do you think of our notepaper? Some class, eh?" On arrival

A younger Harry on holiday at Minaki

in England the 144th Battalion was absorbed into the 18th Reserve Battalion which supplied drafts to the 8th Batallion in France. Under these circumstances Harry's regimental pride apparently ceased to flourish.

The Rifles had quite a line in stationery. They produced a postcard with a picture of the Devil prodding the Kaiser in the belly with a pitchfork and the caption "The Devil will get his own." The Kaiser, clearly regretting having laid his foul schemes without taking the Winnipeg Rifles into account, radiates surprise and chagrin to the end of his magnificent mustaches. There were even intimation of mortality cards for the use of bereaved next of kin with the regimental crest and "The path of duty was the way to glory" embossed in black.

At Camp Hughes, in a blazing hot Manitoba summer which could not have been much of a preparation for the cold, wet summer of 1917 in France, Harry drilled and marched and marched and drilled. "We were on manoeuvres yesterday [5 July] and walked about 15 miles. It was about 125° in the shade and the dust rose off the road in clouds. We doubled all through the hills with our whole pack on our backs, so you can see we had some swell day. We were issued straw hats but I lost mine when the storm broke this morning. I think the wind blew it clean over to North

Dakota." Despite all this rigorous and doubtless healthy exercise, Harry enjoyed himself. He asked for a baseball glove, "a decent sized one, not a cheap skinny little thing" and went off to play ball the evening of the day of the church parade for the dead hero Lord Kitchener. (He passed up a poker game because he was short of money.)

Harry had some leave in August 1916 and spent part of it at his beloved Minaki, his stay there being enlivened by a terrific flood. Summers at Minaki (a resort near the Ontario-Manitoba border) spent canoeing, swimming and fishing, were probably the happiest times of Harry's life; for three years after his death his mother could not bring herself to return there.

In September 1916 the 144th rattled off by train all the way to Halifax where they embarked on the *Olympic*. Harry and Harold "got a stateroom from one of the stewards so we travelled in good style. It only cost us $2.50 a piece and had sleeping in a hammock beat a mile." (Indeed it must have; the *Olympic* was the *Titanic's* sister ship.) From Liverpool, they travelled on one of "their funny little English trains" to their first camp, outside Godalming in Surrey. As an engineer's son Harry was always amused by English trains: "The biggest boxcar here carries 10 tons but the trains certainly speed up some."

Harry was to be at three other camps in England, one near Seaford in Sussex and two near Folkstone in Kent. He also had two leaves in London. After a cold, grey wet English winter he summed up his impression of English life: "We are having pretty good weather now but personally I don't agree with Robert Browning when he said 'Oh to be in England now that April's there.' As far as I can see England has nothing on Canada at all." But despite the weather, the spartan accommodations and the hours on the parade ground, Harry got a lot of pleasure out of his months in England. His favourite camp seems to have been the one near Seaford, a seaside resort between Eastbourne and Newhaven. He was so impressed by the town and the surrounding countryside, especially the chalk cliffs called the Seven Sisters, that he sent his family a set of postcard views so that they could share his enjoyment.

It was London that he really loved. When he heard a British Tommy call the Australian and Canadian soldiers "six-shillings-a-day tourists" he thought the label "pretty good." Although on his first London leave in October he dutifully toured such monuments of the past as the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey, he was not overly impressed. Of the "old graves" in the Abbey he wrote "It is nice to know that so-and-

The Kaiser meets his match on this regimental post card mailed at Fort William, 14 September 1916. The message on the reverse side includes the comment to Mrs. Orde: "The parcel of eats was swell".

so is buried here and somebody else over in another corner, but for myself I would sooner go to the Orpheum." (In light of this remark it is ironic to reflect that Harry, like all the Allied soldiers who have no graves, is, at least symbolically, buried in the Abbey in that tomb that not even the Queen would tread upon.) In February 1917 he had four days in London, in which space of time he went to shows in four London theatres — a concert by the band of the Scots Guards at the Prince's ("Some band all right and I could have listened to it all night"); *Cheerio* at the London Pavilion, apparently something of a disappointment; *Zig-Zag* at the Hippodrome and *Three Cheers* at the Shaftsbury. *Zig-Zag* was a revue "and you can't imagine the size of the chorus and the swell scenery and the dresses . . . The Walker Theatre [in Winnipeg] would look like a vaudeville act beside this show as there were about 200 in the chorus." Despite this magnificence, and despite the fact that it starred George Robey, Shirley Kellog and Daphne Pollard, *Zig-Zag* paled somewhat in comparison with *Three Cheers*, which starred Harry Lauder. "*Three Cheers* certainly was the best show I ever saw. Believe me, Harry Lauder is worth seeing, in fact he is the best actor I ever saw."

Another pleasant aspect of London was Harry's relative Laura Bennett and her twenty-year old daughter, the "swell-looking" Amorel. As a boy with four sisters Harry must have particularly appreciated their company as a relief from the masculine environment of the army. Relative or no, it was good of Mrs. Bennett to take the emotional risk of knowing another man who might die. With a husband and a brother in the army she had enough hostages to fortune as it was.

Yet London after all was an interlude. There were definite drawbacks to life in the camps, a major one, being the cold. Harry literally suffered from cold feet, which probably explains why he liked the metaphor so much. He found that once his feet got cold it was hard to keep the rest of him warm. As a result he took his socks seriously. "My socks are holding out fine," he wrote in March, "in fact I counted them last night and found I had 15 pairs without holes and three pair with holes so I am jake for socks for a few months yet. When you go to France you can only take three pair . . ."

Of course the real trouble with England was that it wasn't home. Harry's homesickness was exacerbated by the fact that he was away from home for his eighteenth birthday (16 December 1916), for Christmas and for Easter. The gloom of Christmas was enhanced by an outbreak of measles and the resulting quarantine, which lasted from late November to the end of the year. "Cooped up" in the camp, he was unable to get down to Seaford to do his Christmas shopping. And the day of his birthday he spent from 8:30 to 5:30

Harry in one of grandfather's "blooming" boats during the flood at Minaki, August 1916.

Canadian War Museum 8179

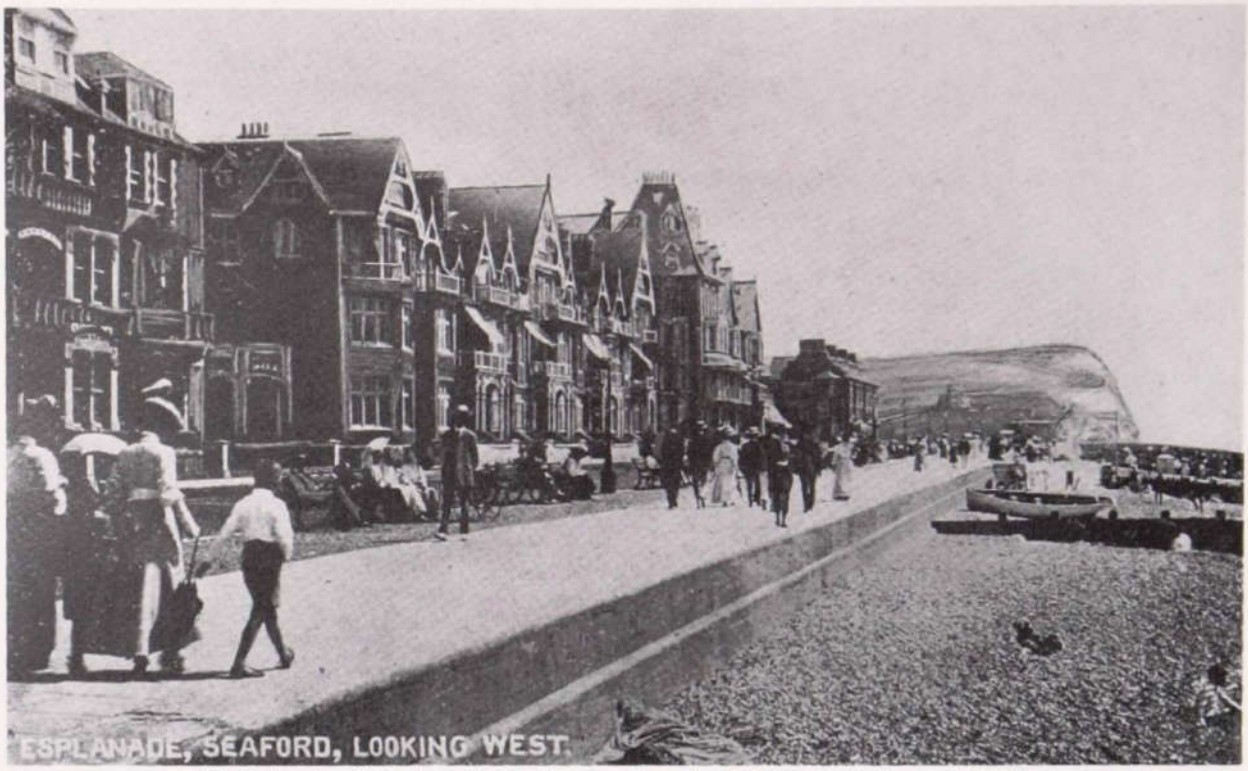
Canada at war: The Second Battle of Ypres, 22 April to 25 May, 1915 by war artist Richard Jack.

on guard duty. "Rotten" in a word, and Harry could not help but think of all the joys of Christmas and the winter pastimes like skating and snowshoeing that he was missing out on. "I suppose when you get this letter it will be Christmas time and me so far from the old 'Peg' [Winnipeg]. Believe me there will be something wrong if I ever leave Winnipeg again once I get back to it. Well all I can do is hope you have a very happy Christmas and let Peg eat my share of turkey and plum pudding. Tell Dorothy to skate a couple of rounds of the 'Ampey' [Amphitheatre rink] for me." (By giving up his share in pleasure to his sisters he was in a way able to take part. It is a wise and generous attitude that seems to have been characteristic, to judge by his parting words to his sister Peg.)

In January, writing to Dorothy about a toboggan party, he says: "I wish I had been there sliding along the old Assiniboine with a bunch of pretty girls. Not these big-footed blokes, but civilized Canuck girls. But anyway I can just take a look out of the door of this Y.M.C.A. Hut and see the blooming channel rolling in which you certainly can't do in Winnipeg." This rather bizarre bit of topographical information is Harry's way of expressing his determination to enjoy as best he could the circumstances in which he found himself. He did his best not to complain. Even Christmas, he admits, had turned out not badly: "We got turkey and plum pudding for dinner which was pretty good for the army." In April he again expresses a dual sense of longing to be in Winnipeg and of refusing to complain because he was not: "We are having swell weather now and I guess I am pretty lucky to be spending Easter at the seaside, although I wouldn't kick at being in Winnipeg."

The fact of being in the army was something else that Harry had to cope with. One senses that it is an institution of which he took a dim view once his first enthusiasm had worn off. He rarely mentions his officers, and when he does it is usually not to praise them. While he does admit that it had been "very decent" of Captain Birchall to offer him any extra funds he needed for Christmas, a short time before he had reported: "Old Cap. Birchall is in hospital with the measles and all I hope is that they prove fatal, which is too good for him, at that." Some months later he writes: "I saw Capt. Birchall the other day and he asked me how it was I hadn't gone to France yet. I told him I would probably get there before him, anyway, which closed him up quick."

Although Harry had been in the O.T.C. (Officer Training Corps) at school and had qualified as a sergeant and a lieutenant in early 1916, he adamantly remained a private. He only once regretted this, when an airplane landed on the parade ground "and took



The Esplanade at Seaford near the Canadian camp, from a book of views sent by Harry to his mother.

some of the officers for a ride, but of course the privates didn't get a look in at all." His decision to remain a private may have had pragmatic reasons — "I think a private has the best chance" — but perhaps sprang also from his evidently deep-seated dislike of pretense. Encountering a Winnipeg acquaintance in Folkstone, for example, he comments that he "thinks as much of himself as ever." And when the United States joined the war, he writes: ". . . I guess we will have some Yanks over here to win the war for us. If hot air would lick the Germans I guess the Yanks would win a few battles at that." Attempting to gain higher rank obviously struck him as a pretentious thing to do. When he received his sergeant's certificate he says: "It looks like an insurance policy or a deed to a house but might make good shaving paper." He later suggests that his parents could have the sergeant's and lieutenant's certificates "framed and hang them in the coalbin."

Privates have to do as they are told but they can think what they like, whereas even one stripe on a man's sleeve compromises his soul. Harry's quirky independence may well have been modelled on that of his father, contentedly driving his trains, quite unconcerned by the fact that his brothers followed careers potentially more lucrative and of greater social cachet. But however Harry came by this sense of being a free man he continually re-affirmed it as he dealt with the issue of being sent to France. As the months went on and more and more of his friends went to the front, some of them returning with stories of what it was like, Harry tried to settle on what his attitude should be on going to France. If he were sent he would have to go, of course, but he was free to decide what he thought about it.

This self-examination was intensified by the prolonged uncertainty as to whether he ever would be sent to France. The army continually changed its mind about the future of Harry Orde so as soon as he had adjusted to one possibility everything would be altered. Added to this was the fact that Harry had no way of knowing when the war would end. It was not out of the question that peace might come before he would have to fight. (Once in France he was to lose this easy optimism about the length of the war.) In October and November of 1916 he makes comments such as: "I don't know when we go to France but I hope the war is over before we do. Not that I am afraid, of course! . . . I wouldn't mind going over and taking a chance on getting wounded and getting out of it and can't say I am extra anxious to go over." Early in November most of their platoon received a medical exam but Harry and Harold were left out "so I guess we won't go until the next draft, which suits me as I am not anxious to go over the channel." About two weeks later

there was another medical exam. "Harold passed O.K. for France but I went before the board for flat feet, eyesight and underage." He was marked fit for garrison duty or permanent base "so I don't suppose I will go to the trenches . . . That suits me fine as I am no V.C. hero although I would go when I was sent." Harry's sight was no worse than it had been before he enlisted, and his feet were probably no more poorly designed for marching than most people's; the real reason for his rejection was that the army doctors were not eager to pass a boy of seventeen fit for France.

For a time Harry cheerfully resigned himself to doing his bit for England. He reported that Mrs. Bennett had written to offer "a lot of sympathy for my misfortune, as she called it, in being turned down by the Medical Board. I think that congratulations would be better after some of the stories I have heard about France." Then, just before Christmas there came a rumour that so many men had been marked unfit that there would have to be another medical board. "If they say I am fit I am perfectly willing to take a chance with the rest and believe me if I ever get to France the Germans will get a tough time of it." This rumour proved unfounded, or at any rate premature, and Harry was expecting to be transferred to a labour battalion when the colonel ordered that he be taken off.

There was a need for office men and so Harry, with his experience in the Canadian Northern paymaster's office, was put to work in quartermaster stores. "It is a cinch and can last for the duration as far as I am concerned."

By late January Harry was sleeping in a hut with other men classified A4, or under age. Being too young is an entirely curable complaint, and it is hard not to think of the boys in that hut as human seedlings waiting until they were big enough to be planted out. (Harry had literally grown since joining up; in April he wrote that he weighed 178 pounds and was almost six feet, "so I guess soldiering isn't doing me any harm.") Early in February Harry assumes that he will eventually go to France but he expects to have at least six more months working in the stores.

Men were being sent to the front by the hundreds and "It sure is some job getting them all rigged out." The emotional involvement of helping to prepare all these men for the front, like that of a mother getting her children ready for school, may have helped to draw him towards France. In April, "Still slinging clothes for the quarter bloke", he was re-examined with the rest of the physically unfit and so desperate was the need for men that nearly everybody was re-classified Al. Now Harry's only problem was that he needed an extra pair of glasses before he could go, which he

Harry: "Being too young is an entirely curable complaint . . ."

Seaford Camp
Nov 12th/16

Dear Mother,

Just a few lines to let you know I am well. The enclosed pictures are some of the scenes around our camp. I have ~~these~~ most of them and they are certainly swell especially the "Seven Sisters" cliffs. The Manitoba Company of the 196th University Batt. was attached to our battalion and so all my old freends are in our ~~com~~ battalion

thought might take several months. By this time, most of the battalion had been to France and he was afraid that he might be left out. "I wouldn't mind going on a draft myself but I guess I will have to wait for a few months yet. If the blooming war doesn't end before August I might possibly get a chance to put a Fritzie's lights out but from the way the French are travelling I guess they will be across the Rhine by July."

Whether he ever got the extra pair of glasses or not he doesn't say. As he was not going to France to be a sniper but to operate a rifle grenade (a rifle for launching grenades) perhaps the army didn't bother. In any event, on 4 May he made his will as required, leaving everything to his mother, and on 5 May he wrote: "I am in a draft to the 8th Battalion and expect to leave for France any day now. We have been inspected and fully equipped and are all ready to go . . . Another fellow out of the stores is also in the draft. I didn't like leaving my soft job but I guess I joined to fight and I wouldn't try to get out of going on a bet. I am glad I am going to the 8th because that's where Harold Lindsay is and between the two of us we ought to put a few Fritzies' lights out. . . . we're going over at the best time of year for good weather and I don't suppose the blooming war will last much longer than this summer." He had prudently enlisted Mrs. Bennett as his personal quartermaster. She was to keep his extra ten pairs of socks and send them as required.

(We shall never know if Mrs. Bennett found herself with socks on hand on the day when her last letter to Harry was returned with a note on the envelope to say that he had been killed.) He never mentions what personal possessions he took with him but they may have included the prayer book his grandfather had sent him and the "shinplaster" (paper money worth 25 cents) his sister Peggy had given him for Easter, for he had promised that "believe me, I will hang on to [it] until I can spend it up in Dave Goodyers." It was like a talisman that would bring him home again.

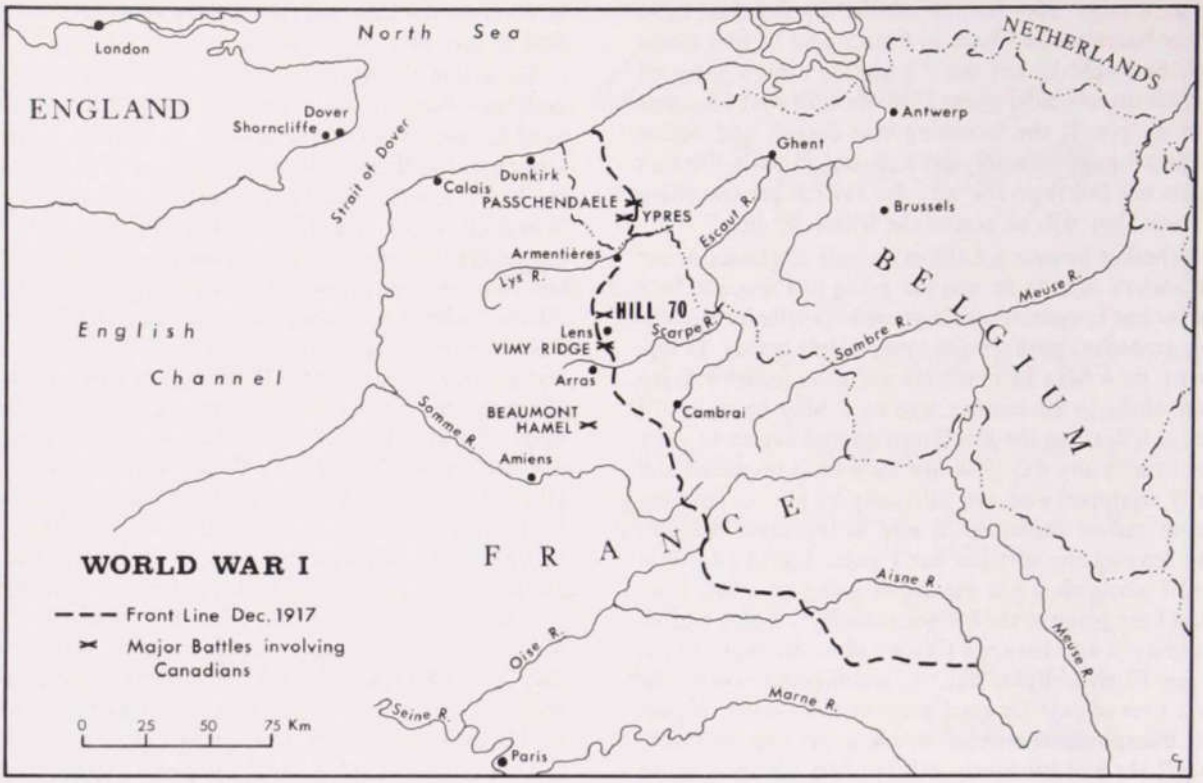
And so Harry Orde sailed for France. There was to be no more fooling around in England. "When I got over here I began to realize there was a war on and the rumble of the guns doesn't give you a chance to forget it either but I guess the only thing is to keep my heart up and my head down."

As Harry was a private his letters were censored. Several of them are in envelopes which bear the official declaration "I certify on my honour that the contents of this envelope refer to nothing but intimate and domestic matters", which the writer had to sign. The trust in the honour of other ranks was such that these letters were opened by the censors anyway, but they need not have worried about Harry's honour. It is as if he is writing from the territories of dreams — "up the line," "in the trenches," "No Man's Land," "out here," even the date-line "France" seems to refer to some mythical land and not a country we could ever find on any map of the world.

Yet within the limits of official censorship and the understandably self-imposed censorship Harry managed to convey something of what it was like to be a soldier on the Western Front. As he had done in England, he always mentions meeting friends from Winnipeg, which gives the surreal impression that the battlefields of Artois were occupied exclusively by Germans and Winnipeggers. These meetings might be relatively cheerful, as when he encounters John Boswell from Kelvin and finds him "still the same old John he was at school." More often he meets one friend to talk about the death of another. "I met a fellow named Bill Bond who used to be in the firehall on Gertrude Avenue and he was near Frank Whyte when Frank was killed. Frank was wounded in the leg but was killed by a sniper when he was going out of the trenches. . . . I guess pretty near everybody is in the army that I know in Winnipeg. . . . I met Alan Hart the other day. . . . He saw George Mathesius a few days before George was killed." And he reports on his reunion with Harold: "Harold Lindsay and I are in the same platoon and he is looking fine but isn't as noisy as he used to be. He says that fighting would make anybody quiet."

There are few details about going up the line, either on scouting or working parties or to fight. "I have been up the line three times . . . but not right into the fighting yet although I have had shells burst pretty near me, in fact near enough to make us all duck. One big shell hit about three yards from me but didn't explode although it would not have hurt me much as I hit the ground pretty quick when I heard it coming. . . . The noise of shells bursting doesn't bother me a bit but I don't like them to bust too near me. . . . I am out resting at present but expect to go into the line again shortly which never worries me till I get there and it is 'no bon' (as the French say) at times but the only thing to do is grin and bear it. . . . I have had a few narrow escapes but 'a miss is as good as a mile'. . . . Don't worry about me as I am blooming careful and the Ordes are pretty lucky."

When soldiers were out of the front lines they were described as "resting", as if they were out-of-work actors. Harry describes this as "monotonous" but is still able to take a cheery sort of pleasure in the sheer squalor of his surroundings. "I have plenty of socks, etc. and outside of being good and lousy I am well fixed. The lice in this country are as big as rats and get fat on Keating's powder but you soon get used to them and they don't bother you much. . . . Send along a razor as it will be pretty handy. I have the old one of yours now but the thread is broken and after a week or so without shaving I sure have some beard. . . . We will probably be going into the line again soon which suits me fine as we have to shine up when we are out

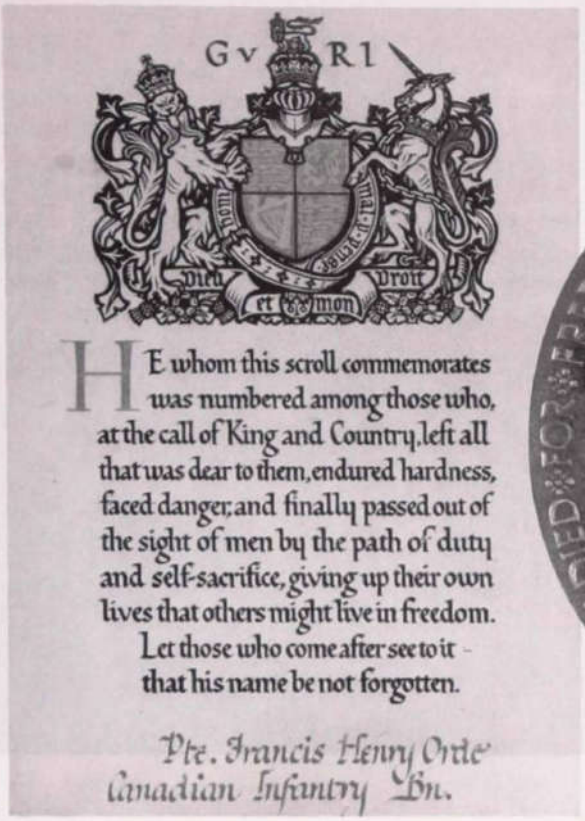


of the line. . . . The cigarettes come in pretty handy as we only get issued 20 a week and the pay is pretty small out here. . . . If you send a couple of dollars in a registered envelope I will feel like a millionaire for a while. . . . The boys in the platoon had quite a joke about the tin of corned beef you sent in the parcel. . . . That is what we call bully beef here and this country is spread about a foot thick with it. Nobody ever eats it and we use it for paving the floors of dugouts. . . . I had a few swims in a big tank and it certainly was fine but I am still as lousy as ever which is the best way to be out here as you can occupy yourself catching big fat ones. I could eat anything now from moccasins to fishworms and believe me I will never turn down bacon again. I sure missed a lot when I wouldn't eat it for a long time. If it wasn't for cigarettes, rum and bacon all the soldiers out here would be dead long ago and I have never seen a man turn down a rum issue yet. (We only get it when it is cold and wet in the summer but I understand that it is issued every day in the winter). . . . You can buy quite a bit of stuff to eat in the canteens out here and it is nice to have candies, cigarettes, chocolates, etc. to take into the line with you."

By early July Harry could imagine his mother and sisters down at their summer home at Minaki: "I wouldn't mind spending a few days there myself but I guess it will be another year before I finish 'doing my bit' . . . It will be the first summer I have missed going down, for a few days at the least, for quite a few years." As he had done in England, he imagined himself at the dinner table: "If you catch a big 'lunge' [muskelunge] be sure and land him and have a few steaks off him for me." He also looked back on his own childhood, which he had not done before. "I suppose you will all be down at Minaki having a swell time. Jean and Peg should be able to swim this summer, as I could when I was their age, although Dorothy learned quicker than I did."

This turning to childhood parallels a realization that he had changed since leaving home, a realization which he expresses by calling himself an "old soldier". He writes in June: "It is over sixteenth months since I joined the army. It doesn't seem as long as that but I am an old soldier now." To his mother, writing about a week before his death, he says: "I just remembered August 3rd was your birthday and it was also exactly a year and a half since I joined the army. It doesn't seem like 18 months since I signed on but I guess I must be getting to be an old soldier now."

Here is the old soldier's last letter, written on 11 August and post-marked the day before his death. Although obviously weary and longing to be out of the war (his cousin D'Arcy Hubbell is called "pretty lucky"



for having been wounded), he can still tease his grandfather about his passion for buying boats and still display that capacity for enjoyment which was perhaps his greatest talent.

Aug. 11thh1917
France

Dear Mother,

I received your letter of July 19th and also one from Dorothy and one from Jean. I also got the parcel with the cake olives cigarettes in it and it came at a pretty good time as I got it the night I came out of the line. I was out of cigarettes and feeling pretty well fagged out and it was certainly fine opening that parcel and having a good feed out of it.

Dad's parcel from Eaton's also came along today and it certainly had some swell grub in it. Believe me, the troops will live high for a few days anyway.

We are out resting now for a few days and we are having pretty good weather. I suppose the Colonel [grandfather] is having as much trouble as ever with the motor-boat. He ought to sell the bunch and buy one good one as those blooming things never were any good.

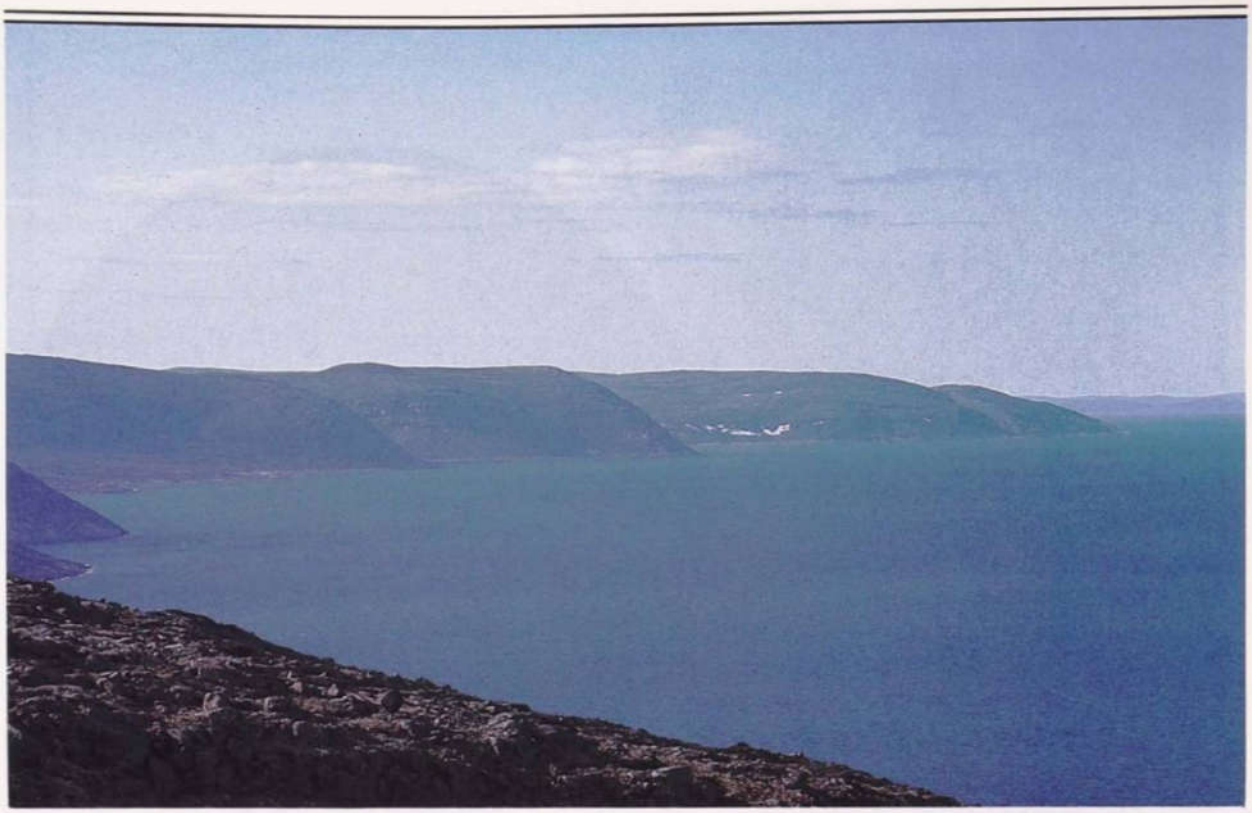
I guess I will close now but I will write in a couple of days and I might have a little more news to write about.

D'Arcy was pretty lucky getting wounded and going to England but I guess he had a pretty narrow escape.

Love to everybody, your loving son, Harry.

Early in the morning of 15 August, shortly after the attack on Hill 70 began, Harry Orde was hit by an explosive bullet while advancing between the second and third German trenches. This may have killed him at once before knocking him into the shell-crater in which, somewhere outside the town of Lens, his body still lies. Perhaps he did not have time to know that everything was being taken from him. ♦

Anne Morton is the daughter of Harry's sister, Peggy Orde (Mrs. W.L. Morton). She works for the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg.



WAGER BAY

A history and a future

~

By David F. Pelly

Today it is a wilderness tract, caught between two eras. In Canada, one is privileged to see such a place, at such a time. In the years ahead it will be a tourist destination, perhaps a National Park. In times past it was home for successive groups of Inuit, and the site of a remote Hudson's Bay Company trading post. But when I visited Wager Bay during the summer of 1986, it was a pocket of wild beauty, detached from today's technological world and apparently abandoned by its former indigenous inhabitants. It had left a past life behind, and lay quietly awaiting its future.

Wager Bay is a fault basin surrounded by rocky plateaux typical of shield country. Deep valleys cut through the granite bluffs to form spectacular scenery along the shore. Rivers flowing out of the tundra cascade over the cliffs toward Wager Bay below. The fiord penetrates 150 kilometres into the barrenlands of northern Keewatin, just south of the Arctic Circle on the west side of Hudson Bay. Remote, treeless, and wild, the shores of Wager Bay are at first forbidding. But in time, I eased into harmony with the land, discovering its beauty, its history, and its freedom.

Four thousand years ago perhaps — no one can know for sure — the first group of Inuit moved onto the land around Wager Bay, presumably attracted by the bountiful wildlife that provided food and raw material for everything from clothing to harpoons. The first European to enter the fiord, in search of the elusive Northwest Passage, was Christopher Middleton in 1742. Middleton, known as a skillful navigator from his service with the Hudson's Bay Company, carried on this quest orders from the Admiralty which included advice on how to conduct himself should he encounter any Japanese shipping. His westward penetration of North America ended, however, just below the reversing falls at the head of Wager Bay. The name he assigned — after the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Charles Wager — endured.

Almost two centuries later, the recorded history of Wager Bay begins. The intervening years remain a mystery. We can presume that the area was used by Inuit hunters, but to what extent is unknown. Archaeological discoveries around Wager Bay span the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the summer of 1925, when the first HBC schooner sailed into Wager Inlet, as it was then known, the crew counted only nine Inuit families, dependent on the sea and the surrounding land for their livelihood. Most of these, it became evident, were only recently arrived in the area.

Opposite page: The cliffs along the south shore of Wager Bay. Below: A hearth located in an old stone tent ring near the mouth of the Piksimanik River. Note the plant growth which has developed over time in soil enriched by the nutrients dropped by former users while cooking.

Photos by Donna Barnett.

It was not, therefore, the local population which moved the Company to establish a new trading post at Wager Inlet. The real motive was revealed in an earlier letter from the District Manager to the Fur Trade Commissioner, dated 5 February 1925.

> I am forwarding you requisitions and plans of a new Post to be erected at the extreme west end of Wager Inlet.
>
> The object in establishing a Post in this quarter is not so much for the purpose of developing the country, but to prevent the majority of the Eskimos hunting between Wager Inlet, Backs River and northwards to the Arctic coast, from trading at [Revillon Freres'] Baker Lake Post.
>
> From the strategic position in which Revillon's Post is situated at Baker Lake, there is a great possibility in the future of their managing to gain a good footing in this particular sphere, unless we endeavour to cut off the Backs River and Arctic coast trade from them. — W.R. Mitchell

With this aim clearly defined, the Company's *M.S. Fort Chesterfield* sailed up the inlet in September 1925 in search of a site for the new post as far west as possible. Temporarily halted by the reversing falls, until it became clear that during slack water it could be navigated by the schooner, they entered the small lake above the falls. Within hours the site was determined.

A week after the schooner sailed, leaving Jimmy Thom in charge of the new post, with the assistance of Sam Voisey, the Post Journal records that the house was boarded up all but the roof, and the store was floored. With the help of local Inuit, and the incentive offered by the arrival of winter's first snowfall, construction moved along quickly.

This lake on which the post was situated, called Tushyooyuk by the natives, now Ford Lake, is surrounded by gentler terrain than that of Wager Bay. The shore slopes gradually up toward the hills, which are less rocky than the plateaux surrounding the Inlet. In the autumn of 1925 it must have felt the most desolate place on Earth to the early traders.

Their story is recorded in detail in the daily entries to the Post Journal; the mundane routine, the good humour, the pain, and the joy are all there. The five-room, uninsulated house in which the two traders lived was only 30x18 feet, the nearby store slightly smaller. Around them were the tents or snow houses, depending on the season, of the few Inuit families who attached themselves to the post. Scattered through the journals are the colourful names of visitors: Attak, Keeluk, Kaffee, Sicsak, Kaumokauk, Kudlo, Nugjook, Eelanak, Inooksitwayook. Others who remained more permanently close by were usually assigned anglicized names by the traders, thus the journal records Inuit Dick and Samson and Deaf Johnny.

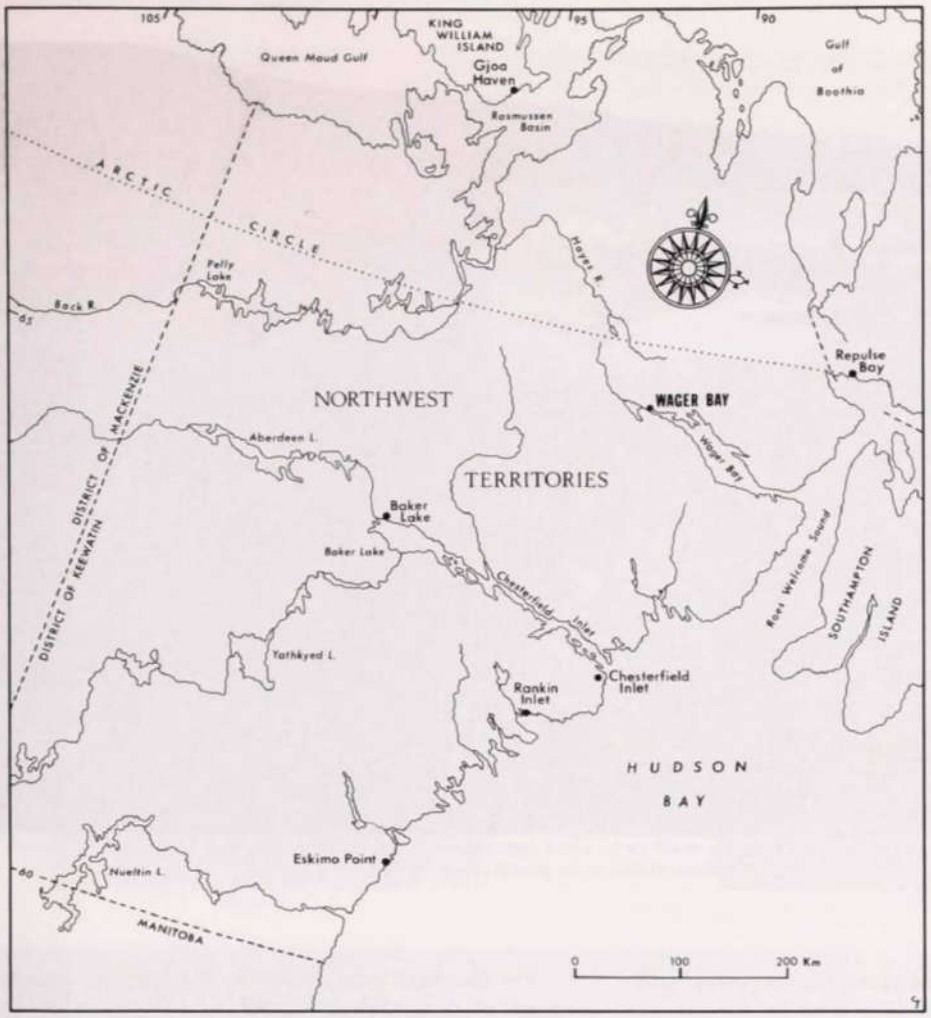
But even as the traders settled into routine, mindful of their ultimate purpose in establishing the new post, they were not long in laying plans for a trip toward the Back River country. With Dick leading the way, the small party loaded up two sleds and set out over unknown territory in early February, the coldest time of year. They were gone just over a month, but eventually found some camps near the mouth of the Hayes River, to the east of Back River. Here, with Dick's assistance, they announced the establishment of a new trading post just five days away. The traders returned to the relative comfort of their Wager Inlet house, optimistic that the Inuit from the north would be along in the spring with a supply of foxes to trade.

Dick is a dominant figure in the pages of the Post Journal. References to him are frequent. On Sunday, 6 November 1927, the first such domestic entry records the arrival of a child. In itself, that seems insignificant enough. But, as the history of Wager Bay unfolds, that child becomes a central player.

> -10 Clear with decrease in wind. The wind blew so strong last night that driven snow was forced thru the window frames of both bedrooms and kitchen. Also a pile of lumber flooring was scattered about like matches. During the early hours of the morning native Dick's wife Tootah gave birth to a boy.

The boy was called Robert Tatty. Today he lives in Rankin Inlet, a community to the south, but he remembers growing up to manhood in Wager Bay. He recalls the active post, the manager they called Qaluqniqsaq meaning "the one with lighter hair", the comings and goings of hunters from the camps with their foxes to trade, the abundance of wildlife all around. "They were good times," he told me. For him, that territory has always been home. He has returned many times, often for long periods. In the early 1980s he moved his family back there, but problems with his health and pressures of schooling for his grandchildren ended that after two years. Now, he says with a smile, he can stay there permanently only after he dies.

When Robert Tatty was a young boy, life at the Wager Inlet post was a mixture of the early frontier, the romantic notion of the fur trader, the brute hardship of the Arctic, the pathos of any small community, and the early stages of the North's transition into the field of southern technology. The journals are a telling mixture of comments on engines, the first airplanes, and the introduction of shortwave radios, with observations on fish, deer, and seals caught, the weather, and the local Inuit. Almost without knowing, the journal-keepers left us a vivid picture of their life and a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KING WILLIAM ISLAND
95
90
Queen Maud Gulf
Gjoa Haven
Gulf of Boothia
Rasmussen Basin
ARCTIC CIRCLE
Hayes R.
Back R.
Pelly Lake
65
Repulse Bay
NORTHWEST
WAGER BAY
DISTRICT OF MACKENZIE
Aberdeen L.
TERRITORIES
Wager Bay
Baker Lake
Baker Lake
Chesterfield Inlet
DISTRICT OF KEEWATIN
Rae Wellcome Sound
SOUTHAMPTON ISLAND
Yathkyed L.
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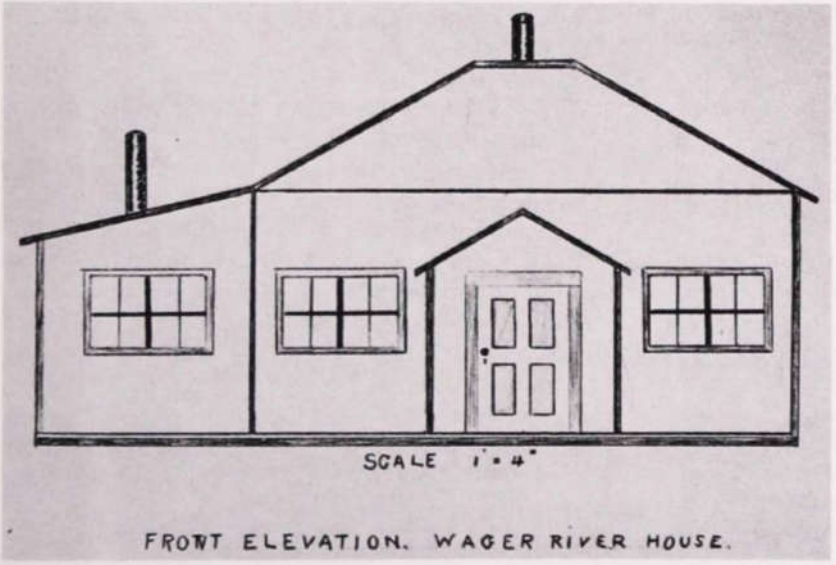

SCALE 1"=4'
FRONT ELEVATION. WAGER RIVER HOUSE.

A freshwater pond between the sea and the cliffs along the south shore, which supports the growth of cotton grass in the foreground, and some nesting arctic loons hidden in the growth along the side.

record of historic detail that increases its power with the passing of time.

In 1929 an Inuit from the Back River came to the post to trade. He brought with him news of a dying man. This must not have been so noteworthy to the trader, but something about the tale made him record it in the Journal. It is impossible for us to know for sure, but considering the area, the time, and the established history of British exploration there during the nineteenth century, this little entry might well be an important, heretofore lost clue. It is dated Friday, 8 November, 1929.

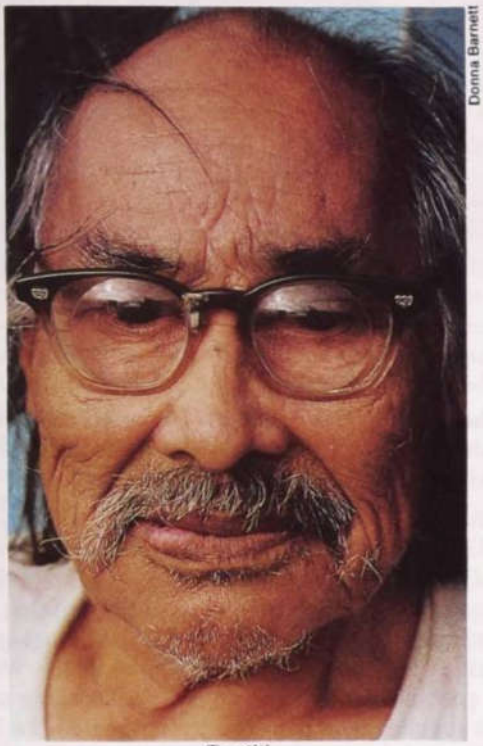
> Eelanak (from nr. mouth Back River) stated a native who was dying told his relatives how he came across a beacon [rock cairn] a few years ago. He looked into the base of same and found some books which he tore apart and practically destroyed them all, his guilty conscience must have worried him, as this was absolutely the first time he ever mentioned anything to any natives about his find. I asked Eelanak to try and bring some of the pieces if he could get any into the post when he comes in, in the spring.

There is a record that Eelanak returned the next May, but no further mention of the papers. News of Eelanak's death reached the post early in 1931.

For the most part, however, the journals are more personal than they are secular in importance. They paint the mosaic of life at Wager Inlet.

> **December 3rd, 1928:** slightly overcast — no wind. Samson off to traps in a.m. Sicsak in with some fish. Men hauling water & feeding dogs. At office work.
> **October 7th, 1929:** Fine sunny day, moderate west wind. Staff employed at office work. Attukta arrived in this evening to report that his wife died five days ago. According to native Dick the old lady strangled herself to death. Apparently she has been very ill for some time and had given up hopes of recovering and wanted to die, so, while her husband was away from camp she ordered the children out of the tent and committed the deed. Wonderful display of Aurora tonight.
> **November 4th, 1929:** Visibility very poor today. Cold north west wind changing to north towards evening. J. Spence [clerk] with natives Dick & Sutoni left this morning to set some traps up by Kauminalook.

Looking up the valley of the Piksimanik River from a hillside beside the rivermouth.



Donna Barnett

Tungilik

David Petty

Robert Tatty

Donna Barnett

Self employed compiling records from Outfit 256 and making out last months forms. Lamps have to be lighted at four o'clock. The last few days are really the first winter days we have had, frost showing on windows and doors and generally feeling wintry, especially when one wakes up in the morning.

December 25th, 1929: Dull and overcast, calm, snowing a little. Had all the natives in tonight, gave them a feed and presents, after which they enjoyed themselves dancing for the rest of the evening. The music was supplied by native Tommy on a five dollar accordion. Everyone enjoyed themselves. Ipooyauak and Enukshuk . . . being Back's River natives and as Dick would say "First time see'em Christmas" were greatly amused and no doubt it made an effect upon them.

January 13th, 1931: . . . [Keeluk] has now had a young wife bestowed upon him, she is Samson's wife's eldest girl and needless to say Keeluk is all tickled up the back — and elsewhere, I suppose.

As 1932 passes, the journal notes that the local Inuit have been without food much of the time, and that only one Inuit, Samson, has come into the post to trade. Foxes are scarce. Spirits are low.

January 4th, 1933: . . . Natives Deaf Johnny, Angatinguak, Sutoxi, & Nowya arrived at post this evening and they all were in a sorry plight with frostbite, hunger & tiredness. The majority of their dogs had died on them through lack of food & they had but seven dogs amongst them when they arrived here. None of these natives had any [fox] fur [to trade].

January 5th, 1933: . . . Gave the natives a dance tonight to cheer them up, as they all seem very downhearted & miserable owing to the scarcity of fur.

March 27th, 1933: . . . Still no signs of any natives arriving, so I guess thay are getting very little fur.

April 4th, 1933: . . . It is time some natives were showing up to trade. They must be getting very little fur, if such is the case the longer they stay away the better . . .

April 9th, 1933: . . . Native Tommy & wife arrived in A.M. He had 1 fox. Wager Inlet this year is beyond the pale. It is enough to make any self-respecting trader feel like a rest cure patient at a Health Spa.

May 10th, 1933: . . . Natives Arngnawa & Nowya with wives & family arrived at post tonight 12 P.M. They bring in the same story which we have been hearing all winter — absolutely no fur in the country.

May 31st, 1933: This brings to a close Outfit 263, one of the poorest fur years since this post was established, & it is with absolutely no regrets from either member of staff that we write 'finis' to this most disastrous outfit.

Hudson's Bay Company

Dick, from The Beaver, 1934.

This "disastrous outfit" resulted in a loss of $3,043.90. The post had not been profitable for a number of years, so it is not surprising that the decision was made to withdraw the staff from Wager Inlet. The last complete entry in the journal is for Saturday, 26 August 1933. The *Fort Severn* arrived at the Wager Inlet post on the 28th and commenced loading some of the supplies. The process was finished on the 30th and the clerk in charge, William Arthur Heslop, went on board taking his journal with him.

Robert Tatty recalls this event quite clearly, though he was a young boy, "not old enough to work yet. I remember when the manager left. He asked my father to take over the post. We moved into the small HBC house [actually the warehouse originally] then. I remember the little open putt-putt boat the manager came to get us in from our camp down the lake."

Dick served most ably in this position as ad hoc manager of the Wager Inlet post. The Company provided him with trading supplies and some coal to heat his house in return for his service. A small commission on his trading profits was left to accumulate for him at Repulse Bay post. Once or twice a year he would make the trek out to this closest point of civilization to bring in the skins he had collected from other hunters, and to restock his outfit. Tatty frequently made these trips with his father, for a young boy must quickly learn to be a man. "When my father and I went out — hunting, or trapping, or to Repulse — we left my two older sisters in charge of the trading."

Hunters came to the post in summer, by foot from inland or by sail from down the Inlet, to get bullets, tea and tobacco on credit, which they would pay back in skins during the coming winter. All winter long occasional hunters came by to turn in their skins. "It was a happy time when lots of people came," recalled Tatty.

In the early 1940s, HBC trader Bill Robinson made a spring trip from the Repulse Bay post to visit Dick at Wager Inlet. His observations offer another perspective on the life that Robert Tatty knew as a growing boy:

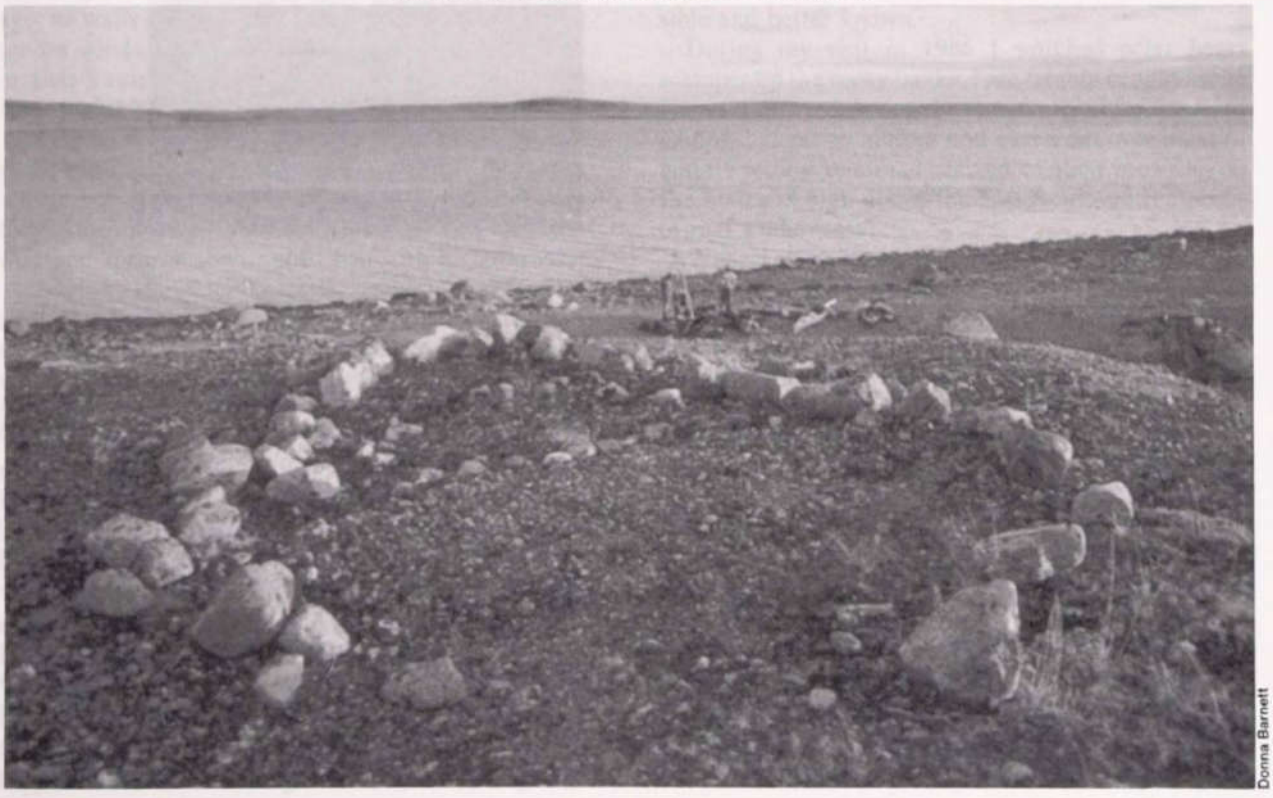
> The warehouse consisted of one huge room with a back porch. It resembled an immense igloo with a snow tunnel entrance. At one end of the room two double beds were placed end to end. Dick and his family seated themselves on one bed while his brother and family sat on the other. Individual caribou-hide sleeping bags were placed on the bare mattresses, marking each member's allotted spot on this giant substitute snow bench. An overturned packing box and a wooden bench along one wall completed the furnishings in the room. A Primus stove and seal-oil lamp shared the surface of the packing box. Other than the seal-oil lamp, no heating arrangements existed. This was Dick's summer quarters. During the cold days of winter the families lived in a couple of cozy igloos.

Since the departure of a Company Manager in 1933, Dick had turned Wager Inlet into a small but consistently profitable operation. He was a man who could find his way simultaneously in two different worlds. He took his responsibilities to the Company seriously, kept his records straight, and never provided a problem for his distant supervisors in Repulse Bay. Yet he maintained the values and traditions of his own heritage within his family structure. He was admired by all who came to know him.

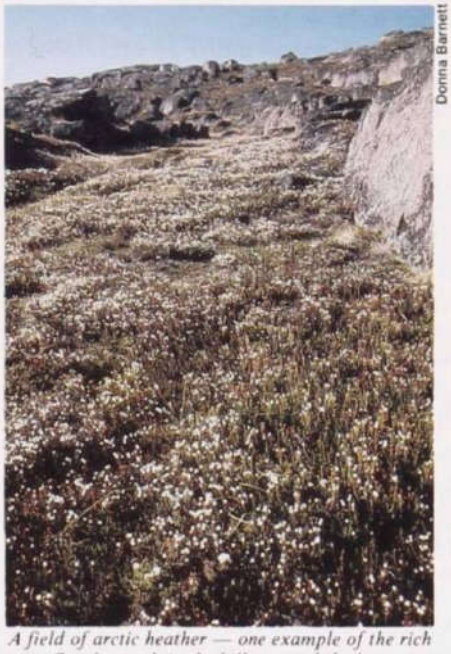
In his annual report dated 31 May 1944, the close of Outfit 274, Repulse Bay manager D. Drysdale summed up the state of the Wager Inlet trade and the valuable contribution made by Dick:

> Dick will not be here with his results till August or early part of September. Last year it was September 22nd before he got here, so he is liable to be just as late this year, since his boat engine is in very bad repair, and he has to sail most of the time . . .
> Dick brought me an Inventory of his stock taken sometime in February . . . He thought he would get another fifty foxes at the most from Back River natives in the later part of April or early in May. I sincerely hope he managed to get them, but I am doubtful as fur seems to be pretty scarce this year. I always stress the point about debts, and no doubt he has often been told about this. He is a pretty careful old fellow and I am sure doing best he can.

A relatively recent tent ring, one of four in a camp, on a small plateau along the north shore of Wager Bay. The kayaks in the background belong to the author's party.



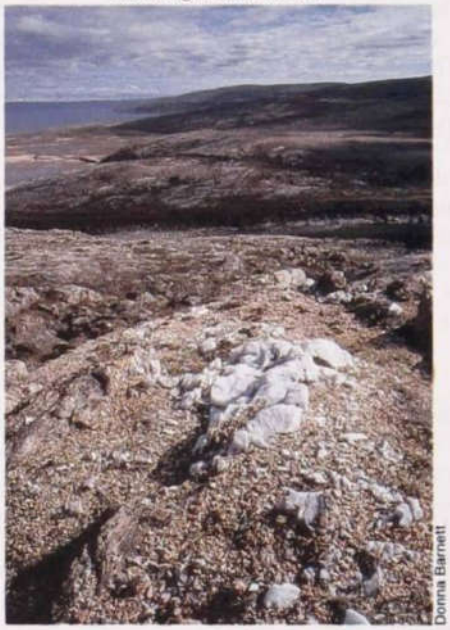
Donna Barnett



Donna Barnett

A field of arctic heather — one example of the rich floral growth in the hills around the bay.

The granite cliffs on the south shore of Wager Bay, cut through at several points by rivers cascading toward the sea.



Donna Barnett

And no doubt when fur is scarce he has a hard time saying NO to anyone who comes to ask for a few pounds of tobacco or tea.

Last fall he had a very narrow escape somewhere in Wager Bay, got caught in a very bad gale which wrecked his old motor boat and he had a very hard time keeping the Peterhead off the rocks. But he says the Peterhead is still in sailing condition — but says the bottom is getting pretty soft and won't stand a rough sea.

Two years later that boat met its end, and with it drew the curtain on the Wager Inlet post. Robert Tatty recalled for me the summer of 1946 when his whole family set out by boat for Repulse Bay, to get the year's supplies. The HBC had promised that a new boat would come in on the annual supply ship — reason enough, it seems, for the whole family to make the trip. The ship was late. They waited patiently in Repulse. The trading post too was nearly out of supplies. Finally the ship came in, with supplies but no new boat for Dick.

"We tried to go back to Wager in the old boat, loaded with our supplies, but it was already freezing and the ice severely damaged the boat. We tried to axe a way through the ice. But eventually it was frozen in and we had to abandon it."

They were about half way down Roes Welcome

Sound toward the inlet. After carrying all the supplies and other salvageable material from the boat into shore across the ice, they decided to spend the winter right there. Using blocks of ice from the sea, they built an ice house, the walls the height of a man, with the boat's sail spread over as a roof.

"We had more business there than before in Wager Bay. There was a lot of fox that year. But that was the end of the HBC in Wager. During that winter I went back to the Wager post to do an inventory and to pick up the remaining supplies."

After the demise of the Wager Inlet post in 1946 the inland people, near the Back River, turned to the northern coast for their trade, mostly in Gjoa Haven according to Tatty. The few families living in Wager Bay remained, and journeyed up to Repulse Bay to trade their fox pelts.

After my 1986 journey around Wager Bay and into the hills surrounding it, I too went to Repulse Bay, and there I met a man who lived at Wager in the late 1940s and 1950s, after the trading post had closed. The last few nights in the wilderness were spent at the mouth of the Piksimanik River, along the north shore of Wager Bay. When I described a noteworthy stone structure I had seen near there, old Tungilik quietly informed me that he had built it. Asked why he had chosen to live there, he told me the caribou hunting was good and then asked, with a knowing smile, if I had not seen all the arctic char in the Piksimanik River. The ring of stones that Tungilik had built forty years ago, its walls a metre high to protect his tent from the tundra winds, still stands beside that river. With him in that camp were two other families, Tavo's and Inusatuajuk's.

"Life was not exciting, a matter of everyday survival, hunting caribou by walking inland, and seal from a little home-made row boat, and catching fish when they came up the river." For that Tungilik built a stone weir and speared the trapped fish with his *kakivak*.

Tungilik's daughter Theresie was born in 1951. Her earliest memories are of Wager Bay at her family's camp beside Piksimanik River. She remembers her mother heating her bath water over a *qulliq* (oil lamp carved in soapstone) while they lived in a snowhouse. Though she has never been back, Wager Bay remains a special place in her heart. At age seven, Theresie was taken away to school in Chesterfield Inlet, a community to the south where the Roman Catholics had established the first mission school.

"That was the first time I was ever inside a building, and the first time I slept in sheets instead of caribou skins. I remember I sweated all night!"

It was about then that the last families moved away from Wager Bay into the communities along the coast. Some hunters returned frequently to the land that had supported them for so long. But Wager Bay began its transition back to an unpeopled wilderness, to the state in which I found it in 1986. When old Tungilik died just weeks after we spoke, with him passed a link with the old days. Another of the great hunters, the men who knew the land as no one ever will again, was gone.

The magic allure of Wager Bay among the people has not died, however. "I have a special feeling for Wager," says John Tatty, Dick's grandson. "I've tried to explain it before, but I can't. When people go there, they just love that place." John Tatty is part of a group of Inuit businessmen planning to develop a controlled amount of tourism in Wager Bay. They see the diverse appeals of Wager Bay as the key to their success: the scenery, the wildlife, the fishing, the history.

Construction of a lodge facility began in the fall of 1986, so that the first tourists could be accommodated during the summer of 1987. With the first nail driven for *Sila* (Outdoors) Lodge, Wager Bay began its new life, leaving its dormant state as a wilderness tract behind. In a sense it is not incongruous with its past, for it will continue to support the lives of its Inuit keepers, who will once again serve the demands of southerners.

Wager Bay is proposed by Parks Canada for consideration as a National Park Reserve, but that is a process which probably will proceed no further until the land claims issue is settled. If the purpose of a National Park is to preserve, then Wager Bay, at least for now, does not need that protection. It is remote; National Park status would only make it more accessible and better known.

During my visit in 1986 I watched polar bears scamper up the rocky banks. I ate freshly caught arctic char. I wandered among the tent circles of former Inuit camps. I stood on hilltops and gazed out over miles of empty, rolling tundra. I stalked caribou browsing on the plateaux high above the bay. I enjoyed the peace of real wilderness.

When I think back, Tungilik's last words to me linger in my memory. "People are always happy to go to a plentiful land." Such a thought was true for him, and true for the generations of Inuit who preceded him, and for the early HBC traders, and for Eelanak, and Dick, and now for his grandson, each in his own way. And, in another way, it was true for this small expedition to Wager Bay, as it will be for visitors in years to come. ♦

David F. Pelly has spent much of the last ten years studying and travelling in the Keewatin wilderness and recently wrote a book on the history of the Inland Inuit, Qikaaluktut — Images of Inuit Life. *He acknowledges the assistance of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in the preparation of this article.*

Acadia and the Acadians: In the Shadow of Quebec

By JOHN G. REID

By the spring of 1701, France had laid claim to a large empire in North America. As well as in the colonies of Canada — that is, the St. Lawrence region — and Acadia, French settlers were established in Placentia and other nearby sites in Newfoundland. The French crown had asserted its rights to the Hudson Bay territories and to the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. The creation of the colony of Louisiana was ordered in May 1701, and at the same time the previously ill-defined French claims in the Great Lakes region and further west were reshaped by the ordering of agricultural settlement at Detroit and of a stronger French missionary and trading presence in the Illinois country. France had no intention of settling the northwest, and lacked the resources to do so, but fully intended to maintain its alliances with Indian peoples and thus prevent English encroachment.

In this constantly evolving pattern of imperial claims and strategies, the colony of Acadia represented only one small part of the vast extent of territories involved. The geographical boundaries of the colony were variously defined during the seventeenth century, but were most typically set out in the instructions given in 1670 to a newly-appointed governor, Hector d'Andigné de Grandfontaine:

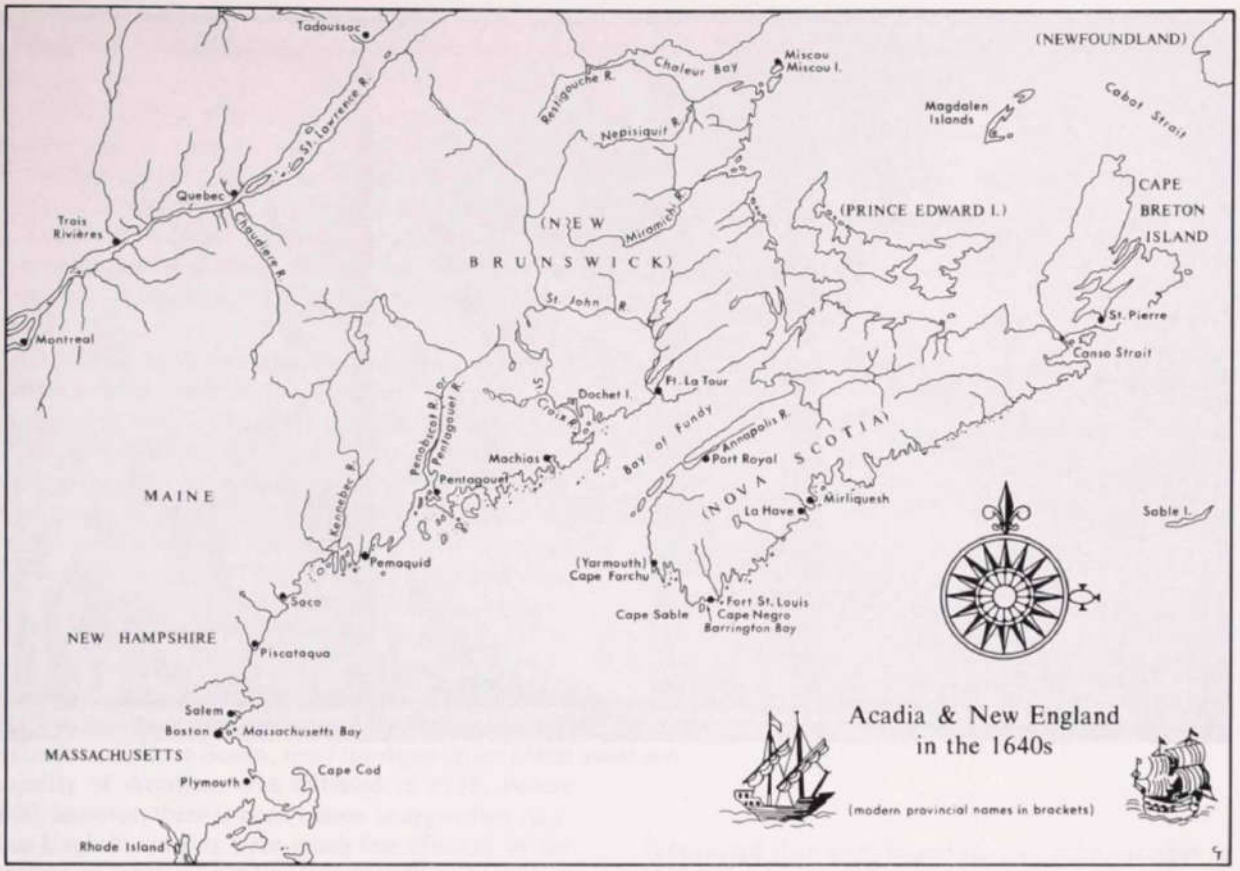
> The said province of Acadia . . . is bounded by the full extent of coastline from and including Quinibeciy [Kennebec] and Pantagouet [Penobscot] running north to Canceau [Canso] and Cape Breton, and includes all the territory west of this coastline as far as the great St. Lawrence River.

In effect, Acadia consisted of the territory now known as the Maritime region of Canada and the northeastern part of the modern state of Maine. It was small in population. By 1700, there were some 1,500 Acadians. Most were located in the agricultural settlements in the Dauphin (Annapolis) valley, around Cobequid Bay, and on the Isthmus of Chignecto. They formed part of a total colonial population of New France that exceeded 15,000. Even that figure was small when set beside the 250,000 of the English colonies further south, and the much larger population of the Spanish possessions in Central and South America.

So puny did the colony of Acadia seem, that at least one influential contemporary was inclined to dismiss its importance out of hand. In 1685 the Intendant of New France, Jacques de Meulles, visited Acadia on an extended tour of inspection. He recognized the potential value of the land and its natural resources, but was not impressed with the colony's development and said as much in his report:

> Acadia at present is such a trifling affair, lacking proper maintenance and drawing no support from France, that most of the inhabitants have abandoned it in order to settle in the Boston area, by reason of the ongoing trading relationship which they have with the English.

De Meulles's statement contained a serious inaccuracy: he had misunderstood the nature of the Acadian-New England relationship, which did imply frequent contacts and even Acadian travels to Boston, but had not led to the kind of removals he described. Nevertheless, his comment is significant. It represents a Canadian perception of Acadia as an obscure province having little importance of its own. It also represents a view of Acadia's importance — or lack of it — that has been adopted all too readily by later historians.

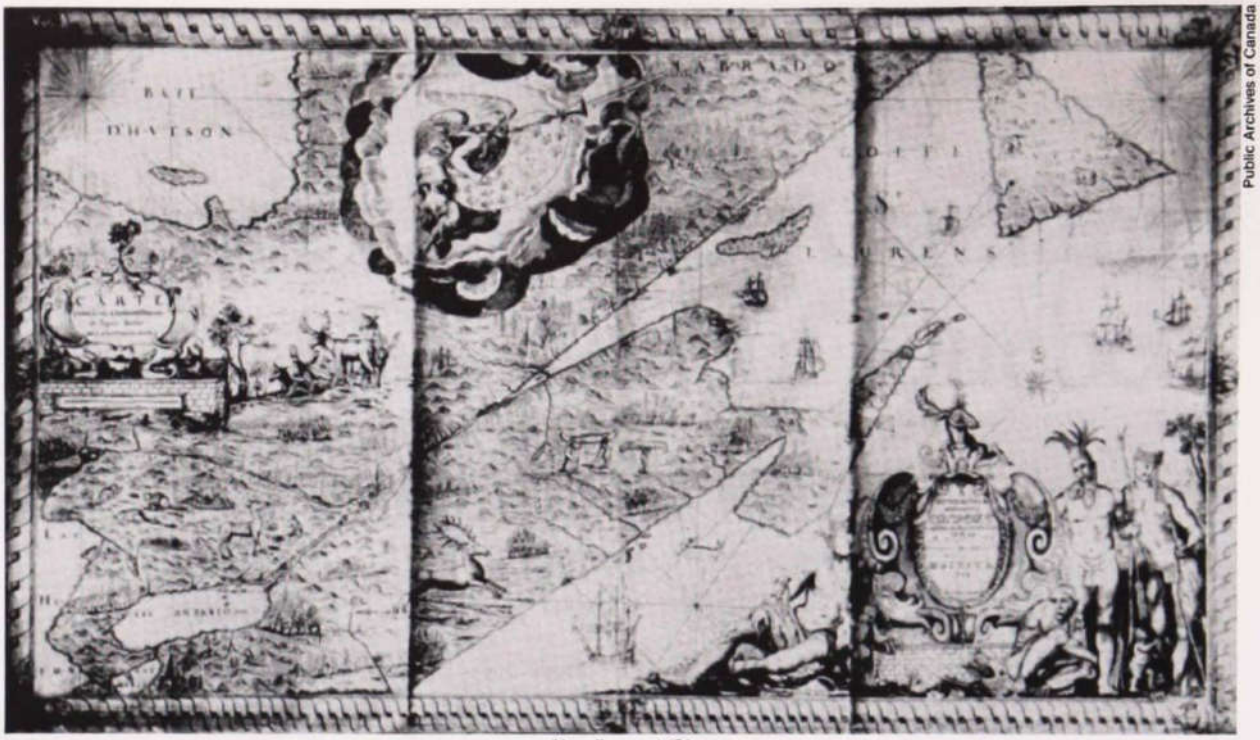


Not that Acadia has lacked historians. As well as numerous accounts of the colony that are focused on local or genealogical topics, and other histories that are concerned more with the eighteenth century and the Acadian deportation than with the seventeenth, important recent work has been completed by a number of scholars. The impression is frequently left, however, that Acadia was indeed "such a trifling affair" that its development can safely be ignored.

A logical context in which to reassess the importance of Acadia is to begin with the distinction (first noted in 1927 by the historian J.B. Brebner) between Acadia as a European colonial venture and Acadia as the location in which the Acadian people became established. As a European colony — planned and initiated by Europeans, and evaluated by colonial administrators according to European commercial and strategic considerations — Acadia was a failure. A case can be made that it deserves the attention of historians partly for that reason, in that it provides an exception to the general pattern of successful European conquest of America; but that is another story. Instead, let us focus on the experience of the Acadians as a people. Let me suggest that the Acadian experience differed in important respects from that of other colonial populations in New France, to an extent that entitles Acadia to full consideration as a major component part of the French empire in America.

Acadian society was, to a degree unusual among European colonial societies in the seventeenth century, a North American creation. It was built not only upon the response of the Acadians to their physical environment, in the development of a distinctive form of agriculture on dyked marshes around the shores of the Bay of Fundy, but also upon relationships with neighbouring North American peoples, both Indian and European.

Well over a century ago, the historian Francis Parkman made the influential suggestion that harmonious relationships with native peoples were characteristic of French colonization in America, and contrasted with the Indian hostilities provoked by the Spanish and the English. "Spanish civilization," Parkman wrote, "crushed the Indian; English civilization scorned and neglected him; French civilization embraced and cherished him." This generalization enjoyed a long life and it has been only in recent years that it has finally been laid to rest. Modern studies have shown conclusively



Public Archives of Canada

New France 1678.

that the French drew upon a common reservoir of conceptions of the origins and characteristics of native people, which involved the European assumption that native people were "savage", in that they lacked civilization. Whether their savagery was noble or barbaric was a debatable point. Beyond these intellectual images, however, the course of European-Indian relationships depended on the more practical circumstances of interaction: whether common interests existed, the establishment of trust or mistrust, and so forth. These circumstances could vary widely, not only between the spheres of influence of the different European nationalities, but within the respective empires.

Accordingly, French-Indian relationships varied within New France. In Canada and the Great Lakes region complexity prevailed. The long series of conflicts between French and Iroquois are sufficient in themselves to indicate that harmony between French and Indian cannot be considered as a norm. Even with those native peoples who were allies of the French, relationships were not free of stress and strain. The Montagnais of the St. Lawrence valley were sufficiently alienated by the highhanded dealings of Samuel de Champlain in the 1620s that they allied with the English in a temporarily successful attempt to drive the French out of Quebec. The Huron-French alliance in the 1630s and 1640s was neither simple nor unquestioned by either side. Within the colonial society of Canada, including the administrators of royal government from 1663 onwards, as well as strong military and Church establishments, there was constant tension and ambivalence regarding attitudes towards native people. The colony, and the French who penetrated further west, enjoyed good relations with some Indian peoples through diplomacy and trade, but there was no one pattern.

The Acadian experience was different. To be sure, contact with the French brought to the Micmac and Malisect-Passamaquoddy peoples the devastating onset of European disease and the lasting effects of acculturation. These processes had begun with the first European trading visits in the early sixteenth century. In the initial decades of French colonization, from 1604 onwards, there were occasional conflicts between colonizers and native people. The eventual course of the Acadian-Indian relationship, however, was influenced by the small numbers of the Acadians and by their style of settlement. The small numbers implied that the Acadians, like other European populations in isolated colonial outposts in Africa and Asia at this time, could not afford serious native hostility and so had good reason to avoid provoking it. More fundamentally, the nature of Acadian settlement ensured that there was little reason for such hostility. The Acadian settlements, as well as being small in population, were economically based upon marshland agriculture

together with some involvement in the fishery and the fur trade. In none of these activities did the Acadians encroach significantly on Indian land or economy. While the colonial population in Canada felt all the complex effects upon European-native relations that were inseparable from large-scale colonization, the different circumstances of Acadia led to a relationship characterized by frequent contacts, trade relations, and eventually ties of kinship. It was, one historian has remarked, "something akin to a symbiotic relationship."

Also important to the development of Acadian society were links with other European colonies, and notably with New England. In considering the general history of French-British relationships in the colonial era, historians have found it all too easy to read backwards from the conquest of Canada in 1759-60, and to assume that the two nationalities had always been hostile. In most parts of New France, this assumption was not seriously mistaken. Even in Acadia, the bitter French-British warfare of 1690-1713 culminated in confirmation of the British military conquest of 1710. For more that 40 years, the Acadian population would then live in uneasy coexistence with the British colonial authorities of Nova Scotia, until the deportation of the majority of Acadians was initiated in 1755. Before 1690, however, there is good reason to argue that Acadian-English contacts were much less affected by the tensions of imperial rivalry. It is true that there were violent outbreaks, including a destructive English raid on Port Royal in 1613 and a partial occupation of the colony for sixteen years following the capture of the major Acadian settlements by an English naval force under Robert Sedgwick in 1654. Conflicts such as these were to be expected between peoples divided by both nationality and religion. Yet what is more surprising is the extent to which, at other times, cooperation prevailed.

The desire for cooperation can be exemplified in a number of ways. A striking example is the treaty negotiated in 1644 by the Massachusetts colony and the Acadian governor Charles de Menou d'Aulnay, following direct negotiations without reference to the European parent country of either colony. The negotiations gave ample evidence of wariness on either side, and at times outright mistrust. Eventually, however, as an internal Acadian dispute between d'Aulnay and the rival governor Charles de Saint-Etienne de la Tour threatened to bring outright French-English conflict in its wake — La Tour in 1643 used Massachusetts mercenary troops in an attack on d'Aulnay's stronghold at Port Royal — the two colonies consciously turned away from a conflict which could have destroyed them both. When d'Aulnay wrote to the magistrates of Massachusetts in late 1644 of "that peace and intelligence which is requisite in these beginnings . . .," he

New Brunswick Museum

Charles de Menou, Sieur d'Aulnay.

recognized that what bound the two sides together as European colonizers was, at least for the time being, more important than the traditional antagonism between French and English.

That the same was true in an economic sense was demonstrated by the commercial links between Acadia and Massachusetts, which began as early as the 1630s and continued throughout the century. Furs, and later surplus agricultural products such as grain and cattle, were traded to New England merchants in exchange for manufactured products — such as tools and clothing — and food products including sugar and spices. In this way, Acadia was brought within the metropolitan influence of Boston. Far from being passive clients of the English, however, the Acadian merchants who participated in this trade — the *"entrepreneurs-commerçants"* as their historian has termed them — proved well able to deal vigorously and effectively with their New England counterparts, making good use of their trading experience and knowledge of economic conditions.

The overall picture of Acadian society which emerges from portrayal of these characteristics is a very different one from that contained in more traditional accounts of the Acadians. Instead of being the "handful of French peasants" traditionally described by Canadian historians, the Acadians appear as members of an emerging and increasingly complex society. At the same time as the internal coherence of the Acadian

Public Archives of Canada

Quebec 1699.

people was being strengthened by rapid population growth and agricultural expansion, this strength was being underpinned by the forging and maintenance of close links with neighbouring peoples, both Indian and European. One result of these processes was to encourage certain kinds of geographical mobility. Not only did the expansion of Acadian settlement from Port Royal to the Isthmus of Chignecto and the Minas basin lead to increased travel within the colony, but also many Acadians became familiar with Boston and the New England coast.

Thus, when de Meulles referred in 1686 to the tendency of Acadians to "settle in the Boston area," his statement was inaccurate. What he undoubtedly was observing, however, was a mobility on the Bay of Fundy and beyond that was dictated by the particular circumstances of Acadia, and was not readily understandable from either a Canadian or a European perspective. Hence, it was associated by de Meulles with desertions from the colony and accordingly deplored. Another colonial administrator who took a very different view only a few years later was Joseph Robinau de Villebon, governor of Acadia during the war years from 1690 to 1697 and until his death in 1700. Not averse on occasion to absenting himself deliberately from an Acadian community when New England vessels hove into view — in order, as he wrote in his journal on 17 April 1693, "that I might not be a witness to their trading" — Villebon was well aware of the value of Acadian knowledge of New England, and sent Acadians on both open and secret missions to Boston.

Whether understood by colonial officials or not, Acadian society had been formed by the peculiar and unique demands of the colony of Acadia. Without underestimating the social distinctions and gradations that undoubtedly existed, Acadian society can be described in general terms as characterized by geographical mobility, self-consciousness, and self-confidence. It was also a distinctively North American society, having had only tenuous contacts with France since the English conquest of 1654, and instead staking its future development on links with native people and with the neighbouring English colonies — links which had been actively and consciously forged. Within the colony too, local structures of community government developed in the absence of significant official and clerical elites. In the general context of New France, all of this made the Acadian experience unique. Perhaps, in fact, the closest parallel would lie not in New France at all, but in northern New England, where English settlers were similarly skeptical of imperial officialdom and careful to nurture their relationships with native people and with French traders. Within New France, a comparison with the colony of Canada reveals several points of contrast. The pattern of Indian relations in Canada, still profoundly influenced until 1701 by French-Iroquois hostility, was demonstrably different. The pattern of French-English relations was much earlier affected in Canada by direct imperial rivalry, especially as expressed in tension on the New York border. Also, from the time of the reorganization of Canada's administrative structures by the French crown in 1663, the St. Lawrence colony felt the political, economic, and social effects of close contact with France and of the building of a large military establishment which was altogether lacking in Acadia.

This last distinguishing feature of the colony of Acadia would exact a price during the wars of 1690-1713. Acadia was still under English rule in 1663, nine years after the Sedgwick conquest, and so did not participate in the military strengthening and the other reforms that were then set in motion in Canada. By the time Acadia was returned to France in 1670, involvement in expensive European wars was pre-empting any resources that the French crown might have been inclined to allocate to the colony. With its long and indented coastline, moreover, and with its natural sources of fish and furs widely spread in areas that did not necessarily coincide with the major centres of agriculturally-based settlement, Acadia had long been a colony notoriously difficult to defend. As early as 1690, Port Royal was again captured by a New England force, and the final military conquest of the colony took place twenty years later. Although British authorities rejected suggestions at the time that the Acadians

The expulsion of the Acadians, a romantic version by Frank Dicksee for a nineteenth century edition of Evangeline.

should be deported, and although Acadian communities remained apparently undisturbed for some decades to come, the long-term results of the conquest were profound. Not only did the conquest create the conditions that led ultimately to the expulsion of the 1750s, but also factors such as declining Acadian literacy rates gave an indication of the evolution for the time being of a more inward-looking Acadian society.

Nevertheless, the Acadian experience of the seventeenth century deserves to be evaluated on its own terms rather than with later events in mind. When so examined, the history of seventeenth-century Acadia — small in geography and population, and relatively short-lived, as the colony undoubtedly was — can yield significant conclusions. The Acadians, partly because of the very smallness of the colony, and also because of its early isolation from France, were soon brought to confront the realities of life lived in a North American context. In this situation, relationships with other North Americans, both native and European in origin, assumed paramount importance. The active, mobile Acadian society of the late seventeenth century was the result.

The existence of this society can tell us much about the larger empire of New France. The tendency to assume that Canada (that is, the St. Lawrence region) was the great centre of New France is deep-seated among historians. Given that assumption, all other areas of French North America can be seen as peripheral, and of limited importance except insofar as they were integrated into the Canadian economic and military hinterland. Certainly, Canada's colonial population was much greater than that of Acadia. Yet Acadian society, with its distinctive characteristics, offers insights to the historians which are not available in Canada.

To be sure, Acadia's experience *can* be seen as part of the general history of seventeenth-century New France, provided the complexity of the French empire is recognized. French settlers struggled in Newfoundland, Acadia, and Canada to define their relationships with native people and with the English. Exploiters of natural resources, chiefly fish and furs, also did so, not only in those areas but also in the west and south. Everywhere, the outcome of these struggles was affected in part by the varying roles played by government officials and by the church. Above all, the interactions that took place were diverse. Thus, the outcome in Acadia — as represented by Acadian society towards the end of century — differed from the outcome elsewhere. New France did not simply consist of the St. Lawrence region and a few outlying areas. Rather, already in the seventeenth century, it was a great and complex empire. It accommodated colonial situations just as diverse, despite its much smaller population, as those of, say, Massachusetts and Virginia, or Mexico and Peru. Acadia was one of several important parts of that empire, and the significance of the Acadian experience deserves to be evaluated accordingly. ◆

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FROM PETER C. NEWMAN'S
CAESARS OF THE WILDERNESS

A Fearful Innocence

LORD SELKIRK OF RED RIVER

He was that most dangerous of combinations: a blend of moral fastidiousness and spiritual intransigence. A frail Scottish earl with his lungs and soul on fire, Lord Selkirk recruited himself as an agent of destiny, determined to alter the course of history.

That he achieved. His actions triggered the demise of the North West Company, and the Highland settlers he brought to the Red River established Western Canada's founding community.

Yet there is an incomplete quality about his remarkable saga — an enduring uncertainty as to whether he was fool or saint that still haunts the descendants of his people. Cursed as a blight on the landscape by his many enemies and chided for being a misguided visionary by his few friends, Selkirk followed his self-imposed mission, blissfully ignorant of Newton's Third Law of Motion — that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Unable to bridge the gap between noble aspirations and distasteful realities, Lord Selkirk tarnished his cause and eventually succeeded in destroying himself.

Selkirk was driven by his personal sense of guilt over the Scottish crofters' sufferings and by frustration at his own illness, that most falsely energizing of conditions, incurable tuberculosis. The disease racked his every breath during the last dozen years of his life. While devoting his whole being to the Red River Colony, he was trying to muffle in lace handkerchiefs the blood-coughs from his chest — and fighting to keep down the bile he felt at the chicanery of his opponents.

Although he became known mainly for his bold experiments at colonization, Selkirk's more important contribution was geographical. His relentless determination to settle the western lands extended Britain's tenuous hold on the northern half of the North American continent during a particularly critical decade, drawing the attention of London's colonial authorities to a region that might otherwise have gone by default to the United States. The very fact of the Red River Colony's existence proclaimed Britain's transcontinental intentions by planting a vested interest in the path of expansion-minded politicians to the south.

The ragtag diaspora of approximately 270 displaced Highland crofters who settled on the Red River was the Prairie equivalent of the Pilgrims who had emigrated to the Plymouth Colony aboard the *Mayflower* nearly two centuries earlier. Few contemporary maps noted Red River's location; no gazetteer listed its existence. Yet the tiny agricultural enclave at the junction of the Assiniboine and Red rivers developed into a pivotal community, quickly evolving its own social structures and home-grown middle class, its own tensions and pretensions and, eventually, a full-scale rebellion.

Selkirk himself visited Red River only once — in 1817, five years after its founding — and stayed for one fleeting summer. This was his one brief season as benevolent king of his personal domain. He spent the long prairie afternoons tramping the grasslands under the slanting sun, bestowing land on worthy recipients, planning roads and bridges, setting aside tracts for churches and schools, giving shape to his dream. Legend transmuted those thirteen weeks into a hallowed interlude, perpetuated in the community's still extant folklore as affirmation of its founder's compassion and his affinity for the land.

Land had been the chief preoccupation of the Douglases since the thirteenth century, and from 1300 to the Reformation no family had played a more conspicuous part in the affairs of Scotland. Its members, having intermarried eleven times with the Scots royal family (and once with that of England), had been involved in nearly every armed effort to guard and extend Scottish sovereignty.

CAESARS OF THE WILDERNESS

is the second volume of Peter C. Newman's projected three-volume history of the Hudson's Bay Company. *Company of Adventurers*, the first volume in the series, was published in 1985 by Viking Canada. *Caesars of the Wilderness*, from which A Fearful Innocence is taken, will be published by Viking Canada in October.

Manitoba Provincial Archives

The Douglas family seat at St. Mary's Isle, Scotland.

Thomas Douglas was born on 20 June 1771, at St. Mary's Isle, his family's ancient seat in southwestern Scotland. He was still a youngster when he suffered the traumatic experience of having his home invaded by a raiding party under the command of John Paul Jones, the Scottish-born naval hero of the American War of Independence. Jones was determined to impress his potential for greatness on the noble family he felt had spurned him during his youth. The son of a maid and a gardener at nearby Kirkbean, Jones harboured a deep resentment of the Douglases based on more than the great family's master-servant relationship to his parents. Unlike those of his sisters, John's own name did not appear in the register of births at the parish of Kirkbean, and he believed himself to be an illegitimate and unacknowledged offspring of the Selkirks.

Apprenticed as a cabin boy on a merchantman at twelve, John Paul had become chief mate on a Jamaican slaver and in 1772 killed the ringleader of a mutiny aboard his vessel. To escape charges, he added the anonymous-sounding surname "Jones." When the 1775 revolutionary war broke out in the Thirteen Colonies, he joined the new Continental Navy. In command of the *Providence,* he swept the North Atlantic, capturing or sinking a dozen British ships. Later, in charge of the newly commissioned *Ranger,* he sailed to France, where Benjamin Franklin, then the American envoy to Versailles, ordered him to harass shipping off the British Isles and, if possible, kidnap a well-known personage in exchange for American prisoners held in England. These assignments found the *Ranger* on 23 April 1778, nosing into Solway Firth to anchor off the Douglas mansion. Her captain, in full dress uniform, was nervously pacing the quarterdeck, planning an early morning landing party to kidnap Dunbar Hamilton Douglas, 4th Earl of Selkirk. His motive may have been deeply personal, but Jones's bold foray in plucking one of Scotland's leading aristocrats out of his own hall would have been a great coup for the future Republic.

Despite his elaborate preparations, Jones decided at the last moment not to lead the raid in person, assigning that delicate duty to his two chief lieutenants,

Simpson and Wallingford. As the longboat landed at the family dock, a governess snatched young Thomas from where he was playing in the garden and whisked him to safety. When the two naval officers, leading their armed troop of disreputable-looking matelots, knocked on the mansion's great door, something akin to drawing-room comedy ensued. The family butler, Daniel, his professional *sang-froid* hardly ruffled, acidly pointed out that if the visitors were a Royal Navy press-gang, there was no one home to "press." The Americans huffily identified themselves, just as Lady Selkirk came out of the breakfast room to see what the fuss was all about.

With that genteel mixture of total calm and utter contempt that it takes generations to cultivate, Lady Selkirk motioned the two officers into her drawing-room and demanded to know what they wanted. The explanation that they intended to kidnap her husband to be bargained for American prisoners was waved away with the curt comment that the Earl was not home — clearly implying that even if he were, he would hardly stoop to entrust himself to such uncouth colonials. When Lieutenant Wallingford cheerfully replied that it didn't really matter, they would kidnap instead the youngster they had passed in the garden, Lady Selkirk drew herself up to her full height and matter of factly declared they would have to take her life first. She then offered any *objects* in the house that appealed to them.

The discomfited officers looked around, spotted the silver service from which breakfast had so recently been served, and allowed that perhaps the tea and coffee pots and silver salver might be appropriate. Lady Selkirk ordered Daniel to pack the silver in a stout sack, then offered her visitors a glass of wine, asking the butler to pass some whisky to the crewmen waiting outside. The ever-faithful Daniel had no intention of surrendering all of the family's Georgian treasures to the ragamuffins from across the sea, and while packing some of the silver into the sack, substituted lumps of coal wrapped in paper, temporarily secreting a valuable urn beneath a maid's ample apron. The raiding party and Lady Selkirk were meanwhile proposing increasingly spirited toasts to one another's health. The visit came to an end when the waving sailors rowed off in their little boat, clutching the bag of silver — and coal.

Back aboard the *Ranger,* Jones was furious with his two officers. Instead of impressing the Douglases with his greatness, his subordinates had made him out to be a common thief. He immediately decided to buy back the booty from the Navy, pay his crewmen their prize money and return the goods to Lady Selkirk. The following month, he sent her a flowery letter apologizing for the raid. "MADAM," it began, "it cannot be too much lamented that in the profession of arms the Officer of fine feelings, and of real responsibility, should be under the necessity of winking at any action of persons under his command, which his heart cannot approve. But the reflection is doubly severe when he finds himself obliged in appearance to countenance such Action by his authority . . . Knowing Lord Selkirk's interest with his King, and esteeming as I do his private Character, I wished to make him the happy instrument of alleviating the horrors of hopeless captivity when the brave are overpowered and made Prisoners of War. It was perhaps fortunate for you, Madam, that he was from home, for it was my intention to have taken him on board the *Ranger* and to have detained him till thro' this means, a general and fair exchange of Prisoners as well in Europe as in America, had been effected . . . but some officers who were with me could not forbear expressing their discontent, observing that in America no delicacy was shown by the English, who took away all sorts of movable property . . . I have gratified my men, and when the plate is sold, I shall become the purchaser, and I will gratify my own feelings by restoring it to you, in such conveyance as you shall be pleased to direct."

That bit of purple rationalizing should have been the end of the exchange, but Lord Selkirk haughtily sent word to Jones on the family's behalf that he could not possibly countenance return of his silver without consent of the Continental Congress. The objects, which had cost Jones £50, became the issue of protracted legal negotiations before they were returned seven years later, the silver pot still containing dried tea-leaves from the interrupted breakfast.

The harmless incident did much to spread the reputation for calm courage of Lady Selkirk (who wrote to a friend, ". . . I frankly acknowledge my composure to be constitutional"), but it had a lasting impact on the future Lord Selkirk. "This was a momentous event in my life," Thomas later confessed. "I was terribly frightened . . . I developed an antipathy for the United States due almost solely to the buccaneering of John Paul." In his *Red River Valley,* John Perry Pritchett claims that the raid in fact had profund consequences: "Perhaps this may help to explain why the Earl, when considering possible sites in America for colonization projects, was decidedly in favour of districts lying in British territory rather than in the more temperate regions of the United States."

The young Thomas was educated in liberal arts at the University of Edinburgh, where he came under the influence of Dugald Stewart, a brilliant exponent of the Scottish "common sense" school of philosophy, which held that thought should flow from scientific evidence unfettered by metaphysical speculation. Stewart impressed on his youthful charges the notion that universal benevolence was the prime virtue, insisting that "only a man whose ruling or habitual principle

of action is a sense of duty, or a regard for what is right, may be properly denominated virtuous." Counter to the prevailing tenet of the time, this system of beliefs demanded from its followers the active social involvement and aggressive individual initiation of good works that would become the hallmarks of Selkirk's life.

At university, Thomas also befriended Walter Scott (he later met and admired Lord Byron), but the most romantic influences on his youth were tales of his family's exploits, which stressed audacity above every other virtue. Sir James — the famous Black Douglas who had led Robert the Bruce's army into England — was an ancestor. A scarlet, crowned heart was still the centrepiece of the family's coat of arms, honouring James's vain attempt to carry out Bruce's dying wish to have his heart buried in the Holy Land. When he was outnumbered during an encounter in Spain with the Moors on his way to the Middle East, Douglas had thrown the silver chalice containing the heart into the advancing phalanx of his enemies, shouting, "Pass first in fight as thou wert wont to do and Douglas will follow thee or die!" — and had fought his way forward towards his beloved friend's heart. He was slain just before he reached it.

Having seven centuries of fighting blood in his veins was not a heritage easy to live down, especially for young Thomas, who had no aggressive intentions for his own future. Unlike his elder brothers, he was not trained for the law or military service. But having been awakened to the new enlightenment sweeping continental Europe during his university years, he decided to visit France with his brother-in-law, Sir James Hall of Dunglass. That progressive baronet had many close links with some of the intellectuals behind the French Revolution, including the Marquis de Lafayette (a leader of the liberal aristocrats demanding restrictions on the absolute power of the French monarchy), Pierre-Samuel du Pont de Nemours (a reform-minded economist who advocated free trade) and Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville (the moderate reformer who took delivery of the keys to the Bastille after it was stormed in 1789). It was here in the sensitized salons of revolutionary France that the young man's social conscience took root. His humanitarian sensibilities were awakened to a realization of how urgent political imperatives can turn patrician intellectuals into effective men of action. At the same time, he became acutely aware that any society failing to alleviate the plight of the poor might suffer violent consequences *à la guillotine*. These two notions — that thoughtful aristocrats were not precluded from implementing social reform, and that *not* to initiate reform was by far the riskier course — became Thomas Douglas's motivating impulses.

After his return to Scotland, he astonished his father and brothers by choosing to work on the family farm,

John Ross Robertson Collection

Lord Selkirk.

labouring from dawn to dusk as hard as any tenant, ploughing the black earth, scything the stalks of oats and barley. As part of his growing enthusiasm for improved land use, Selkirk began to take private journeys northward into the Highlands. There he came face to face with the notorious Clearances.

A dead hand had lain on Scotland since the defeat of the clans at Culloden, that windswept moor of lost hope where the Jacobites under the Young Pretender were slaughtered by the English redcoats on 16 April 1746. Five thousand starving Highlanders equipped only with broadswords and stout hearts were confronted by a well-drilled cadre of professionals backed by cavalry and cannon. The odds were already uneven enough, but the Scots were also divided by internal jealousies. Many of the Macdonalds, for example, refused to fight because they had been placed on the left wing of the defending formation instead of on the right, which was considered the place of honour.

The battle lasted less than an hour, but 1,200 Scotsmen were killed (compared to 76 Englishmen) and once the fighting was done, the British decided not only to quell the Highland uprising but also to destroy the society that had given rise to it. The stragglers from Culloden were hunted down and killed, and the glens were invaded and occupied. The Highlanders' houses were burned, their herds appropriated, weapons banned, parish records destroyed; the powerful clan

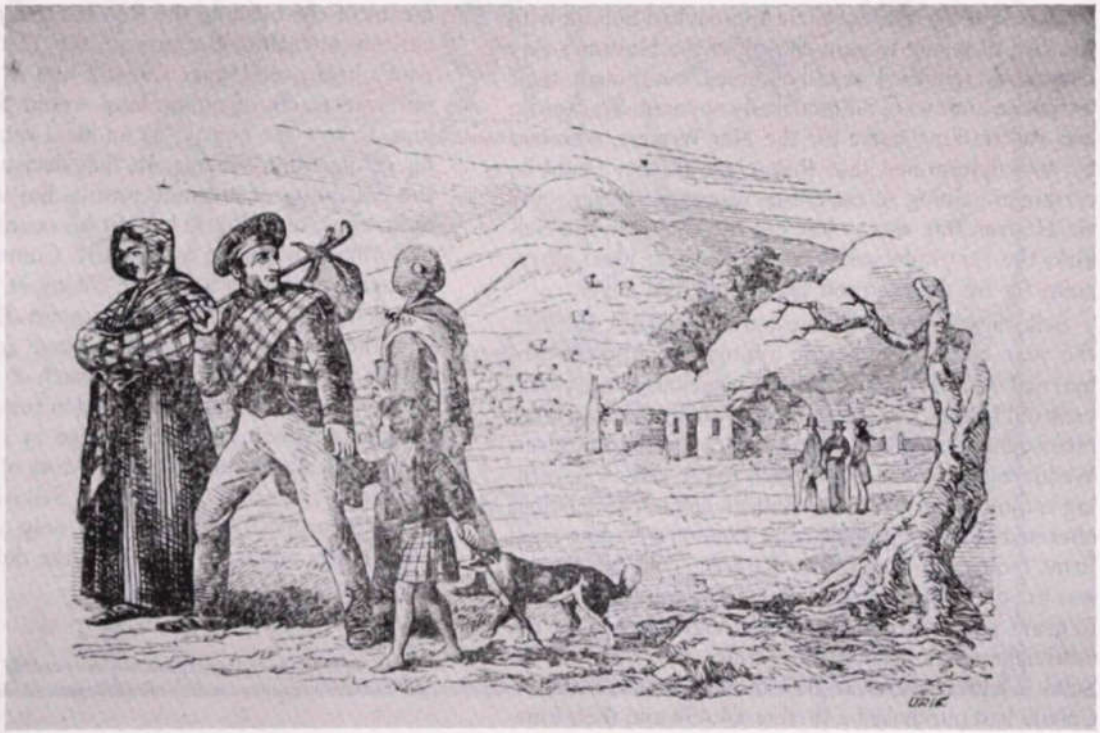
system was methodically dismantled. And then the British got serious: they outlawed wearing of the kilt and forbade playing of the bagpipes.

The traditional feudal bond between lords and followers broke under these measures, and Scottish society began to disintegrate. The clan chiefs, shorn of their authority, seemed to lose even the most basic concern for their own people. During the century after Culloden, the decision to disperse their crofters resulted in the glens and braes being turned into huge sheep farms. There was a ready market for mutton and wool — and sheep, unlike some of the poorer crofters, did not line up for a monthly dole. But clearing the land for pasturage meant driving out the men, women and children who had farmed it for generations. This was done with the help of police and soldiers or just by allowing flocks of Cheviot sheep to swarm over the Highlanders' crops.

The Clearances was a time out of joint. No one then (or now) could calculate exactly how many people were dispossessed in favour of sheep. According to one estimate, two-thirds of the Highlanders in the northern counties of Inverness, Caithness and Sutherland lost their homes. The forced evacuation was most vicious in Sutherlandshire. The Duke of Sutherland had landholdings of 1,332,000 acres, the largest in the realm. From 1811 to 1820, fifteen thousand people were evicted from Sutherland estates to make way for sheep. The valley of Strathnaver in northern Scotland, for example, was evacuated on one day's notice, leaving sixteen hundred people homeless. "The destruction was begun in the west at Grummore," reported British historian John Prebble. "Messengers were sent ahead to all the other townships warning the people that they had an hour in which to evacuate their homes and take away what furniture they could. 'I saw the townships set on fire,' recalled Roderick Macleod, who was a boy at the time. '. . . It was sad, the driving away of these people. The terrible remembrance of the burnings of Strathnaver will live as long as a root of the people remains in the country. . . .' The timber of three hundred buildings burned in the thin May sunshine. The valley was filled again with terrible noise, the crying of women and children, the hysterical barking of the dogs the Northumbrian shepherds had brought with them. 'Nothing but the sword was wanting,' said Macleod, 'to make the scene one of as great barbarity as the earth ever witnessed.' "

The confiscated livestock of the evicted farmers was herded into large enclosures and left there to starve, with cows, goats and bulls goring and trampling one another. Some cattle were allowed to die by the roadsides, their eyes pecked out by ravens, still alive as they bellowed their final anguish.

"They have been driven away, to America across the sea". A contemporary illustration of a highland eviction.



Mitchell Library, Glasgow

Such were the scenes witnessed by the impressionable young Selkirk, and they created an obsession in him to find homes for the displaced crofters. His notion of sponsoring their exodus was hardly novel, since between 1760 and 1808 at least forty-two thousand people fled Scotland for sanctuaries overseas. Because he felt that too many Highlanders were being dispersed to lands where they were lost not only to their native country "but also to the British Empire," he decided to direct at least some of the migrants to British North America.

His prestige and ability to influence events were unexpectedly enhanced in 1799, when at his father's death, as the sole survivor among his brothers, he became the 5th Earl of Selkirk. The new lord used his inherited fortune and authority to purchase landholdings on Prince Edward Island, where in 1803 he successfully settled eight hundred Highlanders. The following year he shipped fifteen families to the twelve hundred acres he had bought at Baldoon, in Upper Canada, but the experiment proved a failure; the land was poorly drained and during the War of 1812 the settlement was pillaged by the Americans.

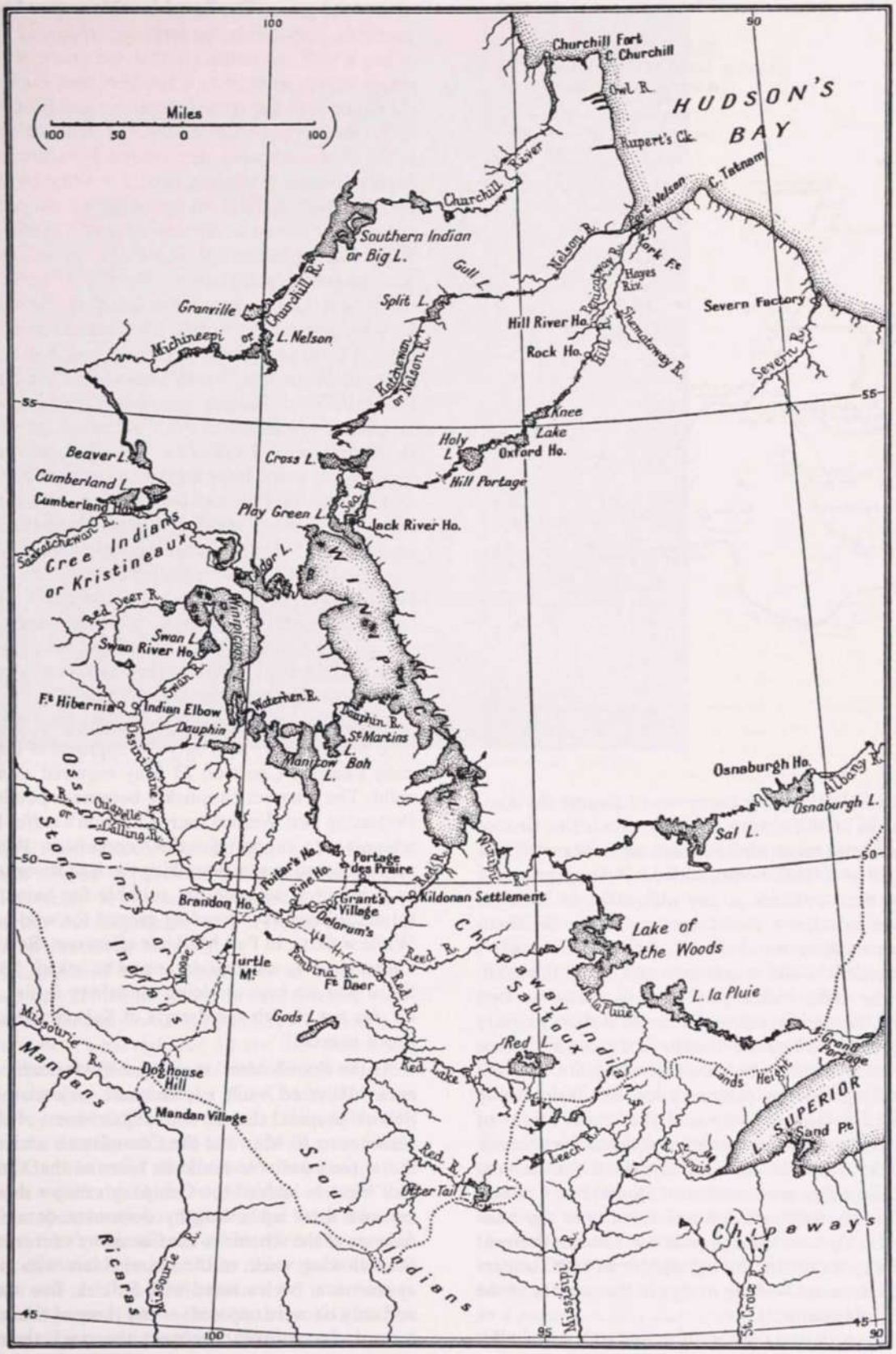
These preliminary forays brought Selkirk to Montreal, where he was treated to a lavish Beaver Club dinner by the nabobs of the North West Company and heard for the first time intriguing tales about North America's lucrative interior. He had read Alexander Mackenzie's recently published *Voyages* and was enthralled by its references to fertile lands owned by the HBC in the Red River Valley, with its 170-day growing season and plentiful buffalo herds to supply fresh meat. When Mackenzie approached Selkirk with the idea of trying to gain control of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Earl readily agreed — though their unspoken aims were diametrically opposed. Mackenzie was the stalking horse for the Nor'Westers, who had by now determined that the only way they could be certain of gaining access to furs using the shorter route via Hudson Bay was to buy out the Company. To Selkirk, the fur trade seemed to provide an ideal entry-point for his colonization scheme at Red River.

Selkirk was already interested in the HBC. In 1807, the year before Mackenzie approached him, he had married Jean Wedderburn, the vivacious twenty-one-year-old beauty whose family was about to make large investments in the Company. Her brother Andrew Wedderburn Colvile was named to the HBC's governing committee in 1809, and Selkirk had not long before obtained written opinions from London's leading legal firms indicating that Prince Rupert's original charter was not only valid but that it clearly assigned the right to grant parts of the Company's huge domain for the establishment of permanent colonies. By 24 May 1809, Selkirk had invested £4,087 in HBC stock, Andrew Colvile had purchased a further £4,454 and their kinsman John Halkett, £3,717. The price per share, which only two years before had been quoted at £250, was down to £50. The HBC at this point had a capitalization of £103,950, but there were only seventy-seven shareholding accounts in existence and fifteen of those were held by estates in names of the dead. Historian K.G. Davies, who referred to the HBC as "this dollhouse company," noted that "many of the shares were being held in chancery pending settlement of claims. One shareholder in 1802 was a lunatic; another, King George III, was intermittently mad. . . . [Neither] took an active part in the company's affairs."

As soon as Mackenzie realized Selkirk's true aims, he threatened a lawsuit but dropped it in favour of urging NWC partners William and Simon McGillivray to start buying stock on their own to thwart the Scottish peer's plans. He correctly estimated that it would take an investment of only £20,000 to capture control of the Company. At their 1811 conclave at Fort William, the Nor'Westers voted enough funds to achieve that total — but they did not move fast enough. Selkirk eventually purchased stock worth a further £15,000, which with his own and his relatives' previous holdings allowed them to dominate in the HBC's affairs. Trade in HBC shares had been so inactive that the stock was not regularly quoted on the London Stock Exchange until 1820. The average number of shareholders who attended the Company's annual courts between 1801 and 1813 was eleven, which included each year's retiring Committeemen and their successors — very often the same individuals, voting to reappoint themselves.

Selkirk's motives in using the HBC charter as a means of establishing the Red River Colony were not entirely altruistic. Because he felt the Family Compact's hold over Upper Canada was so powerful that no large tracts of public land would be available to him, he saw the charter as an ideal vehicle to further his colonization scheme. In that decision he weighed the possibility of ultimate profits, but wanted mainly to inaugurate a plan to benefit his countrymen. When he formally proposed to the HBC Committee that the Company establish an active colony at Red River, he was disappointed to find little support. Except for Colvile, the directors felt hesitant about investing funds of the cash-poor Company in such a risky venture. They were much more interested in restoring dividend payments, which had been halved in 1801 and done away with altogether in 1809. Most of the Committeemen were ready to dismiss Selkirk's idea as a nuisance proposition that would only add to the red ink already much too visible on the debit side of the Company's ledgers.

Map showing the settlement and the surrounding territory from a manuscript map in the Selkirk Papers, St. Mary's Isle.


Miles
100 50 0 100
HUDSON'S BAY
Churchill Fort
C. Churchill
Owl R.
Rupert's Ck.
C. Tatnam
Churchill River
Southern Indian or Big L.
Gull L.
Nelson R.
York Fe
Hayes Riv.
Granville
Churchill R.
Split L.
Hill River Ho.
Severn Factory
Michineepi or L. Nelson
Rock Ho.
Severn R.
Knee Lake
Holy L.
Oxford Ho.
Beaver L.
Cross L.
Hill Portage
Cumberland L.
Cumberland House
Play Green L.
Jack River Ho.
Cree Indians or Kristineaux
Red Deer R.
Swan L.
Swan River Ho.
Fe Hibernia
Indian Elbow
Dauphin L.
Dauphin R.
St Martins L.
Manitow Bah L.
Osnaburgh Ho.
Albany R.
Osnaburgh L.
Sal L.
Portage des Prairie
Brandon Ho.
Grant's Village
Kildonan Settlement
Lake of the Woods
L. la Pluie
Turtle Mt
Pembina
Fe Deer
Gods L.
Red L.
Red Lake
Dog House Hill
Mandan Village
Mandans
Sioux Indians
Ricaras
Otter Tail L.
Leech L.
Grand Portage
L. SUPERIOR
Sand Pt
Chippeways
Missouri R.
Mississippi R.
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100
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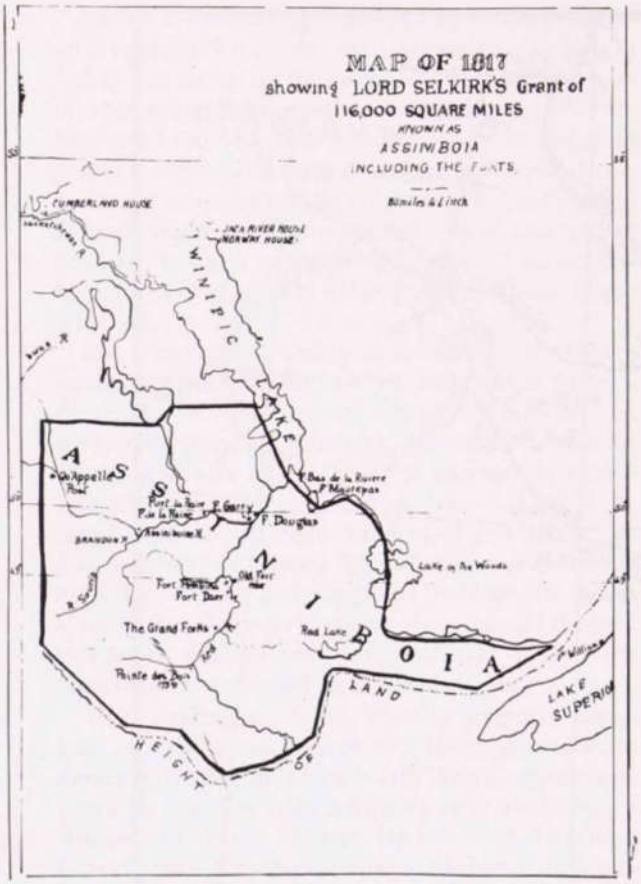


Instead of asking the Company to assume the operating risks of the venture, Selkirk decided to finance the new settlement himself, and on 7 March 1810, presented the HBC board with his revised proposal. Having been relieved of any obligation to back his colonization scheme with corporate funds, the Committeemen were quick to recognize the venture's advantages. It would affirm once and for all the validity of the HBC charter, at least in the sense that granting the land for colonization would clearly signify that the HBC had owned it in the first place. Existence of the colony would also neatly dovetail into Colvile's Retrenching System, which called for dramatically increased inland activity and the replacement of expensive imported food supplies with local provisions. Two other corporate reasons supported the colonial thrust: an indigenous settlement in the Fur Country would supply much-needed new recruits to the business and at the same time provide a welcome retirement community for the increasing number of HBC traders with Indian wives wishing to stay in the country at the end of their contracts.

After considering the details of Selkirk's request for nearly a year, the HBC Committee agreed to the terms of the land grant. The Scottish nobleman and his heirs would be responsible for settling a thousand families in the Red River district within ten years; the colony would supply at least two hundred men each year to the Company's fur-trade operations; and HBC officers in the field would each be allocated two hundred acres in the settlement when they retired. In return for these hardly onerous conditions (and a nominal payment of ten shillings), Selkirk was granted a land empire of stunning proportions. Stretching over 116,000 square miles (the equivalent of 74,240,000 acres), the area covered territory four times the size of Scotland, or only about 5,000 square miles less than the combined land surfaces of the British Isles, including all of Ireland. The grant's borders extended into the present states of Minnesota, North Dakota and the northeast corner of South Dakota. Its western margin was deep in what is now Saskatchewan, almost to the source of the Assiniboine River. That bountiful domain contained what would later prove to be some of the earth's most fertile agricultural land with its self-contained waterways system, reaches of grass (for buffalo grazing) and the lush prospect of an inland empire. It was as magnificent a gift as was ever bestowed on a would-be colonizer. However dominant Selkirk's altruistic impulses, he must have known a bargain when he saw one, having already spent £10,000 on the soggy 1,200-acre settlement at Baldoon. He was now buying more than 74 million acres for ten shillings.

The understanding was accepted by the HBC board on 6 March 1811, with only the approval of the Company's annual Court on 22 May required to make it valid. The transaction quickly became a public issue. Protesting Nor'Westers toured London's coffee houses, whipping up support for their opposition. Pamphleteers published stories describing the Red River territory as a primeval solitude not suitable for human habitation, fit only as a breeding ground for wild animals. While walking in Pall Mall one afternoon, Selkirk was approached by an acquaintance who asked: "By God, Sir, if you are bent on doing something futile . . . why do you not plough the deserts of Sahara, which is so much nearer?"

At the shareholders' meeting, Sir Alexander Mackenzie delivered such a passionate objection to the Selkirk proposal that he won adjournment of the proceedings to 30 May and the Committee's undertaking that a recorded vote would be taken at that time. The Nor'Westers lobbied the Company's major shareholders and drew up a lengthy document detailing the dangers of the scheme to the Company's fur trade. But the following week, of the shareholders who made an appearance, twelve voted with Selkirk, five abstained and only six were opposed — and three of those ballots were declared invalid because the stock they represented had been held less than six months. Amid loud

Landing of the Selkirk Settlers, Red River 1812, from a painting for the Hudson's Bay Company by J.E. Schaflein.

complaints from the Nor'Westers that the land should have been offered at public sale and that the settlers would inevitably be exposed to slaughter by Indians, the meeting was adjourned, and thirteen days later Lord Selkirk received his grant.

The exasperated Nor'Westers reacted with barely contained fury. This silly anachronism called the Hudson's Bay Company was supposed to be dead, or dormant at best; what right did it have, they demanded, to reincarnate itself in vigorous new directions, especially in the very heart of the Fur Country? Simon McGillivray, one of the senior partners then in London to direct the attack, wrote to his wintering confrères: ". . . The Committee of the Hudson's Bay Compny, is at present a mere machine in the hands of Lord Selkirk, who appears to be so much wedded to his schemes of colonization in the interior of North America, that it will require some time, and I fear cause much expense to us, as well as to himself, before he is driven to abandon the project, yet he must be driven to abandon it, for his success would strike at the very existence of the [fur] trade." Other Selkirk critics attacked this peer who, they sneered, was "governed by the moon," and portrayed his colonizing initiative as "a cloak thrown over [his] avaricious designs to become a monopolizer of the fur trade."

The Nor'Westers' objections were easy enough to understand. At the most rudimentary level, the HBC had just handed over to Selkirk the land on which half a dozen of the Montreal company's most important trading forts were located (Pembina, Bas-de-la-Rivière, Dauphin, Gibraltar, Espérance and La Souris) and across which lay its main supply routes from Fort William westward. More important, the valleys of the Red River basin were the main source of the buffalo-based pemmican the NWC needed to feed its canoe brigades, and any interference with that life-giving traffic would endanger the NWC's entire operation. Linked with these immediate concerns was the sinking feeling that nagged the more thoughtful Nor'Westers: that the long-term intention of the Bay men was to use Red River as a natural supply base to wedge themselves into the Athabasca Country, the NWC's most lucrative fur preserve.

Miles Macdonell.

Selkirk listened to the objections but was incapable of absorbing their content. To him, the Red River grant made eminent good sense, bringing together as it did his love of land, the crying need to relocate the Scottish crofters and timely reaffirmation of the HBC charter — thus furthering, in all its aspects, the imperialist ideal so popular among British aristocrats at the time. He shut his eyes and thought of England. "I really don't believe Selkirk realized what he was doing when he planted the Red River Colony right across the North West Company's main lines of communication," insists W. Kaye Lamb, the internationally known fur-trade chronicler. "He just visualized a vast empty country and thought, 'Well, why can't they go five miles north or south of my colony?' never realizing he was cutting off the NWC's access to water-courses vital to their trade." Such *naïveté* was to haunt the Red River Colony's formative years. Selkirk could never bring himself to understand why his settlers could not simply be farmers without becoming pawns in the fur trade. "It is a business," he wrote to Lady Selkirk about that commerce, "which I hate from the bottom of my heart."

Only four days after the HBC's dramatic shareholders' meeting, the Nor'Westers appeared at Hudson's Bay House with a new plan to prevent the bloodshed they could foresee if Selkirk received his grant. They suggested partitioning the Fur Country, permanently reserving Athabasca and the territory west of the Rocky Mountains for themselves, with the Red River Valley awarded to neither company. But having restored their self-confidence (by moving ahead with the Retrenching System) and their earnings (by 1811, profits were £57,860, compared with a loss of £19,000 for 1809), the HBC directors rejected the NWC offer without much thought or analysis. Accepting the NWC compromise might have prevented the tragic events that followed; turning it down meant moving beyond the possibility of averting the fatal consequences.

Selkirk's first expedition should have been a logistical and emotional triumph; instead, it was a misadventure of such proportions that the suffering of its participants became its dominant legacy. The crofters, recruited throughout Scotland, were required to pay £10 per person for transportation to Red River and a year's provisions. Each head of family would then be granted a hundred acres at five shillings an acre, with Selkirk (through the HBC) responsible for marketing excess produce. The settlement was to have its own school and church with a Gaelic-speaking minister of the Presbyterian faith. The plan was to dispatch an advance party from Stornoway (that rocky burgh in the Outer Hebrides where Harris tweed originated) under the command of Miles Macdonell. A Scottish-born former captain in the Loyalist Royal Canadian Volunteers, Macdonell was hired by Selkirk to prepare the colony for permanent settlement. A high-strung martinet who had been frustrated in his army command, Macdonell suffered from the worst aspect of the military mentality: the notion that giving orders persistently and loudly enough can alter any annoying reality. If he had been hired as a double agent by the Nor'Westers to sabotage the project (which he was not — his loyalty to Selkirk was one of his few redeeming qualities), Macdonell could not have behaved much differently than he did. It was as if he were determined to make true the anti-settlement propaganda being spread throughout the Highlands by Simon McGillivray, writing under the pseudonym "The Highlander": "Even if the emigrants escape the scalping knife, they will be subject to constant alarm and terror. Their habitations, their crops, their cattle will be destroyed, and they will find it impossible to exist in the country."

Most of the ships serving the emigrant traffic out of Scotland at the time were little better than slave traders; a little worse, really, because the death of a slave in transit meant lower profits, while the unfortunate settlers paid their steerage fares in advance, and so their health and well-being upon arrival were of little concern to the agents and captains in charge. There is documentation of a brig that sailed for the Carolinas with 450 passengers crammed for eleven weeks into a hold measuring sixty by eighteen feet.

Dysentery, typhus and scurvy claimed all but a handful. No wonder the departure of the ships was such a wrenching experience for those leaving and those who remained, as both groups instinctively realized they were likely never to see one another again. "The Highlanders were like children, uninhibited in their feelings and wildly demonstrative in their grief," wrote John Prebble. "Men and women wept without restraint. They flung themselves on the earth they were leaving, clinging to it so fiercely that sailors had to pry them free and carry them bodily to the boats. . . . Hands were wrung and wrung again, bumpers of whisky tossed wildly off amidst cheers and shouts; the women were forced almost fainting into the boats; and the crowd upon the shore burst into a long, loud cheer. Again and again that cheer was raised and responded to from a boat, while bonnets were thrown into the air, handkerchiefs were waved, and last words of adieu shouted to the receding shore, while, high above all, the wild notes of the pipes were heard pouring forth that by far the finest of pibroch tunes, *Cha till mi tuille,* We Shall Return No More!"

The scene at Stornoway in the summer of 1811 was no exception. If, indeed, these Scottish crofters were the Western Canadian equivalent of the Plymouth Pilgrims, their ship, the *Edward and Ann,* was a poor excuse for the *Mayflower*. Undermanned, with a crew of only sixteen boys, and commanded by a temperamental wharf-rat named Hanwell, she had been a derelict recommissioned especially for this journey, and there had been no visible upgrading from her former state of unseaworthiness. The grey sails were mottled with age, the rigging was loose and torn; the hull leaked and some of the caulking was coming off in large, dried chunks. The hold below decks was not divided into cabins, even though the three dozen regular HBC clerks who were being transported on the same ship to York Factory had been promised separate accommodation, as befitted their relatively exalted station.

The disorderly circumstances of the delayed departure were due in part to the fact that the Collector of Customs at Stornoway was John Reid, whose wife was an aunt of Sir Alexander Mackenzie — who had so recently been frustrated in his attempt to abort the Red River land grant to Selkirk. Reid did his best to postpone the ship's departure. During the embarkation process, his son-in-law, a roustabout who called himself "Captain" John McKenzie, circled the *Edward and Ann* in a bum-boat, trying to recruit emigrants into the King's army. With windy promises of good treatment in the military he mixed lurid descriptions of the hellish conditions waiting on the other side of the Atlantic.

On 25 July 1811, James Robertson, Reid's chief assistant, took his customs pilot boat out to the *Edward and Ann* to check the final muster. "Captain" McKenzie was at his usual station, yelling at the passengers, urging them to sign up for the army while simultaneously accusing those who had already accepted the King's Shilling of being deserters from His Majesty's forces. The HBC clerks were loudly voicing their dissatisfaction with their quarters, indignant that they were being forced to share the crowded lower deck with the emigrants, with only a stretched sail fastened to the bulkheads dividing their quarters.

The emigrants themselves at first seemed subdued, miserable at having to say their family farewells and feeling more than a little overwhelmed by the havoc. Then Robertson, the customs officer, following the practice of the day, announced to the assembled ship's company that, according to British Admiralty law, no one was obliged to depart against his will. That did it. Pandemonium. Half a dozen passengers rushed the rails and jumped overboard. Others commandeered one of the *Edward and Ann*'s lifeboats and rowed ashore. Several more escaped by crowding aboard Robertson's pilot boat and refusing to budge. Some of the deserters were recaptured, but early next morning Captain Hanwell, fed up with all the delays, weighed anchor and put out to sea, leaving at least 20 of the original 125 immigrants behind. It was 26 July, the latest departure date for Hudson Bay ever recorded.

The nightmare voyage took sixty-one days, so that by the time the *Edward and Ann* dropped her rusty anchor at Five Fathom Hole off York Factory, it was far too late in the season to chance an overland journey to Red River. Because York Factory's food supplies were particularly strained that season and the incoming HBC employees were granted first call on the post's limited accommodation, the Selkirk party was left huddling in makeshift quarters at Nelson Encampment, twenty-three miles to the west. The diet of deer and ptarmigan was not sufficient to prevent a bad outbreak of scurvy, and by breakup the next spring, fewer than half the men were mobile. When Macdonell finally departed on 6 July, leading four crude boats up the Hayes River, his followers numbered only twenty-two.

The move south, through wild unknown country along the boiling rivers and across moody Lake Winnipeg, took most of two months. Finally, on 30 August, more than a year after leaving Scotland, the bewildered labourers arrived at the junction of the Assiniboine and Red rivers, traditionally a summer meeting place of local Indian bands and the very spot where, in 1738, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de La Vérendrye, had set up the advance depot he had named Fort Rouge. By 1810 there was a small HBC post in the district and the Nor'Westers had established Fort Gibraltar at the river junction under the command of Alexander Macdonell, Miles's cousin. The newly arrived Macdonell chose the west bank of the

Hudson's Bay Company

The Red River, Fort Douglas in the distance, 1822 by Peter Rindisbacher.

Red River, just below the Assiniboine and only a mile from the NWC post, as the site of Fort Douglas, which he hoped would soon be recognized as the new colony's headquarters. Guests from the establishments of both companies were invited to the formal ceremonies on 4 September at which Miles Macdonell officially took possession of the land on behalf of Lord Selkirk. A cannon was fired, flags were raised, and the usual "regale" of rum was offered to the Indians and Mixed Bloods watching the transfer of their lands with puzzled goodwill. After he was duly sworn in as governor, Macdonell acknowledged the seven-gun salute, then retired to his tent for snacks. Significantly, he spent his first evening celebrating the founding of the settlement at nearby Gibraltar, the NWC fort. The Nor'Westers not only tolerated but compassionately helped feed the newcomers during these early months, convinced that their venture was a foolish aberration that was bound to fail. A clerk named Willard Ferdinand Wentzel, the son of a Norwegian wool merchant, neatly summed up the Montreal company's attitude when he described the newcomers as "victims sacrificed to the sinister views of a noble imposter."

The ordeal endured by the Selkirk colonists during their first decade at Red River is usually tallied in terms of various armed confrontations with the Montrealers' local agents. But initially, the Nor'Westers did nothing to hamper the settlers. They didn't have to. Nature was a much more dependable enemy.

The newcomers may have been simple crofters from the Highlands, but they were men and women of inordinate fortitude and resourcefulness. They came not with ploughs but with hoes and spades to scratch the impervious surface of the great prairie; they boiled buffalo grease for soap and made starch from potatoes; they learned to pound pemmican, and flavoured it with sturgeon eggs. They survived, mainly because there was nowhere else for them to go.

When Sioux or Mixed Bloods attacked, the settlers hid their children under mats of sod or marsh grass; they knew that the nearest possible source for significant reinforcements was York Factory, more than seven hundred miles away. It might as well have been seven thousand. Wolves, wild dogs and blizzards killed their few precious cattle; for two successive summers clattering plagues of grasshoppers destroyed every edible thing, plugging even the wells and chimneys. The Red River washed away what fragile crops had been planted on its flood plains, and drought withered the remainder of the valiantly rooted vegetation. Rats, wild pigeons, blackbirds, mites — the Red River settlers fought one after the other. When they survived the growing seasons (harvesting only two good crops in the first ten years), they were left to face the winters. Flesh shri-

velled in the howling wind, and even the Clearances must at times have seemed easier than staying alive in this frozen blankness. It was so cold, went the local legend, that you could shout outside in winter without being heard, because the sound of voices froze in the thick, frigid air — but come spring, the woods would be filled with an eerie hubbub as the preserved shouts thawed in the warming sun.

About two hundred and seventy settlers arrived over the next four years — Sutherlands, McKays, Gillespies, McLeods, McPhersons, Mathesons, Polsons, McBeaths, Campbells, Harpers, Bethunes, Isbisters, Finlays, McLeans, Johnstons, McKinnons, Malones, McDonalds, Mathewsons, Murrays, McBeths and Bannermans, among others — beating upstream from York Factory, sometimes led by a piper, always propelled by hope.

The colony's relationship with the Indians (except for occasional raids by the Sioux) was amicable, the local Saulteaux helping the people at every turn. Not so the Métis. The original settlers of these river banks, they quickly became the most distinctive element in the battles for tenure and supremacy that followed the arrival of the Scottish (and a few Irish) crofters.

A defiant people who prided themselves on being more than the sum of their bloodlines, the Métis enjoyed the natural grace of body proportion of their Indian ancestors, yet they rejected the traditional nomadic mode of life to become guardians of their own turf. Their land, as it became an essential element in their identity, was one of the primary flashpoints between them and the newcomers. This was true especially after 1813, when HBC surveyor Peter Fidler arrived and, using the river-lot system common to Lower Canada, carefully laid out long narrow strips fronting on the river, the aim being to allow the Scottish families to live closer together and relatively near the protection of Fort Douglas. With the Métis linked to the fur-trading interests of the Nor'Westers just as firmly as the Highlanders were to the Hudson's Bay Company, the land tenure issue escalated the potential for conflict between them. "Lord Selkirk, philanthropist and humanitarian," wrote Don McLean of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, "seems to have been used as a tool by his more 'hard-nosed' business companions within the Hudson's Bay Company's London Board of Directors. Selkirk, wishing only to find a place to locate the destitute survivors of the Highland clans, was duped into founding the 'Selkirk settlement,' consisting of potential farmers and settlers who were to provide supplies for the Hudson's Bay Company. But this settlement was placed directly under the guns of Fort Gibraltar, in the heart of North West territory, where a trained paramilitary force of Métis cavalry held sway."

What had honed the Métis into a "paramilitary force" was the great semi-annual buffalo hunts. The shaggy beasts were just as vital to the fur trade as the beaver because their meat, pounded into pemmican, provided essential food for the voyageurs and traders criss-crossing the country. The Red River district had become the chief source of pemmican for the Nor'Westers, and the livelihood of most Métis was based first on producing the edible tack, then taking it to the depot at Bas-de-la-Rivière on the Winnipeg River.

If the buffalo was the Métis equivalent of the fur trade's beaver, the Red River cart was its canoe. These creaky wooden conveyances were so important to their early way of life that the Métis were sometimes called "wagon-men" and in the Indian sign language of the time were described as being "half cart and half human." An integral part of the buffalo culture (there were 1,210 Red River carts employed in the 1840 hunt), the two-wheeled carts, like the birchbark canoe, had the advantage of being manufactured entirely out of locally available materials. Their wooden frames were held together with wooden pegs instead of nails or screws, and even the tires were made from buffalo hide, which had been stretched on the wheels when

Metis hunting buffalo on the plains, by C.W. Jefferys.

wet and allowed to shrink as it dried. The high, concave wheels could be removed and placed inside the main box of the cart, which, when enclosed in a buffalo-hide tarpaulin, could be paddled across lakes and rivers. The single axle was never greased because that would have attracted too much dust and grit, and the resultant noise was comparable to that of five thousand fingernails drawn across a thousand blackboards. Pulled by oxen or over-the-hill horses, the Red River carts travelled in long, undulating caravans down to St Paul, over to Portage la Prairie and across to Fort Qu'Appelle.

The Red River carts, buffalo hunts and, above all, the land on which they had settled gave the Métis a sense of belonging — and that, in turn, meant that unlike the other non-Indian inhabitants of the Fur Country, they had a specific place of their own to defend. They were not, at least not yet, a "New Nation," as some of their more radical adherents maintained, but they were already a political force — Western Canada's first nationalists, a populist movement in search of a cause.

That cause was provided by the arrival of the Selkirk settlers. Here was a group of cast-offs from another continent insisting *they* had been granted title to the very land the Métis claimed by right of occupation — not to mention descent from Cree and Saulteaux ancestors who had been its original inhabitants.

Given the rallying cry of driving out the unwelcome intruders and the fact that the discipline of the buffalo hunts and their brushes with the Sioux had toughened the Métis into effective warriors, all they needed to launch Canada's first war of liberation was someone to command them.

The leader who emerged to fill this pivotal role at the crucial moment was Cuthbert Grant, embodying in his person (and later in his actions) the coming together of the two pressures building up against the Selkirk settlers: the Métis's growing sense of nationhood, and the avowed strategy of the Nor'Westers to stop the Hudson's Bay Company from interfering with their trade by driving out the land-squatters threatening their supply lines. Grant may have been manipulated by one side or the other in this unusual melding of commercialism and chauvinism. But he didn't have to be. At that point in his life, he really was *both,* a Métis patriot and a loyal Nor'Wester.

The son of a Cree mother and a distinguished NWC wintering partner, also called Cuthbert, who had led the way to Great Slave Lake and become a leading member of the Beaver Club, Grant was baptized a Presbyterian at the Scotch Church on St. Gabriel Street in Montreal and sent to school in Scotland. Orphaned when he was six, young Cuthbert grew up as a ward of the man appointed executor of his father's will — William McGillivray, who later became effective head of the NWC. That exalted sponsorship won him admittance to the inner circles of the Montreal trading concern virtually from childhood, so that Cuthbert was marked as special from the beginning. In 1812, at nineteen, after having spent eleven years in the apprenticing pursuits of a well-tended Scottish schoolboy, he was sent out to the Qu'Appelle River as an NWC clerk, destined for rapid advancement. His sister had married the current master of Fort Gibraltar, the NWC's installation at Red River, and shortly after he went west, Cuthbert fell in love with and married Elizabeth McKay, whose brother was head of a nearby HBC trading post known as Brandon House. These diverse kinship links and his demonstrated abilities as a hunter, horseman, organizer and warrior quickly moved him into a position of natural leadership. When the NWC decided to appoint him to the vague office of "Captain of the Métis," it was only confirmation of his already existing status as the recognized leader of his community. "He was able to identify himself with the new Métis nation, and stands at the beginning of their history, as Louis Riel stands at the end," concluded historians Margaret MacLeod and W.L. Morton.

Manitoba Archives

Cuthbert Grant

It was the provocative tactics of Miles Macdonell, governor of the putative Selkirk Settlement, that united

the Métis as never before. A Roman Catholic of Loyalist stock with the sublime faith that characterizes both, Macdonell had with one stroke removed any vestiges of doubt as to whether the settlers would interfere with the essential flow of pemmican from Red River to depots along the NWC trading routes. Two more boatloads of newcomers had arrived, and Macdonell didn't have enough horses to hunt his own buffalo. His puny farms were years from being self-sustaining; his people were hungry; yet pemmican by the ton was being shipped out of Red River to feed the NWC's distant brigades. Arguing that the life-sustaining food was being produced on land owned by Lord Selkirk, he issued the proclamations that would become opening shots in the Pemmican War: an edict forbidding further exports of the staple from Red River without his permission, and a prohibition against the hunting of buffalo from horseback within the Selkirk territories. He followed these foolhardy initiatives by confiscating four hundred bags of NWC pemmican and moving it under armed guard to Fort Douglas, boasting that he had force enough "to crush all the Nor-Westers . . . should they be so hardy as to resist . . . authority."

As if bent on self-destruction, Macdonell then escalated the antagonism. He sent notices to the commanders of NWC forts on Selkirk lands ordering them to evacuate their posts within six months. That was too much. At their annual council meeting in the Great Hall at Fort William, the Nor'Westers pledged to force the colony out of existence, first by weakening it with efforts to persuade the settlers to desert, and later by inciting the Indians and Métis against any who remained. As a third step, Miles Macdonell was to be arrested on charges of illegal seizure of pemmican and sent to Montreal for trial, leaving the survivors leaderless. The partner placed in charge of these tactics was Duncan Cameron, a veteran harasser of the HBC, who arrived at Red River resplendent in the scarlet uniform of a British army major, complete with epaulettes and dangling sword. That bit of theatre, with hints that he held the King's Commission, cowed the settlers whenever he arrived at thier farms, accompanied by a restless retinue of Métis on wild-eyed horses, offering free transport and land in the balmy acreage of Lower and Upper Canada. (One of his aides-de-camp was Cuthbert Grant wearing the uniform of an ensign in the Voyageurs Corps that had fought in the War of 1812.) His appeals, phrased in the Gaelic so dear to the settlers, often did the trick. His propaganda was no doubt aided by the nocturnal visits of hooting Métis firing shots in the air, riding over crops and occasionally burning a barn. Among the most active participants in these nightly missions was Grant, now clearly in charge of his people, convincing the Métis that they were the true lords of this rich soil and that their freedom depended on defying the settlers' legal pretence to ownership of the Red River Valley. From a camp at Frog Plain commanding a broad reach of the Red River, he participated in several shoot-outs, stealing the remaining settlers' implements and torching their houses. By summer's end of 1815, all but thriteen families had abandoned Red River, and their one cannon had been removed from Fort Douglas and mounted at Fort Gibraltar. Hoping to avert bloodshed, Macdonell surrendered to Cameron at the NWC fort and was promptly spirited away, first to Fort William and then to Montreal.

Disoriented and unprotected, the remaining straggle of settlers retreated by boat to temporary quarters near the north end of Lake Winnipeg. In the former colony, bands of Métis razed farms, burned buildings, attacked Fort Douglas and the small adjoining grist mill. The settlers' last sight of their utopia was smoke wafting in the soft summer breeze and the rampaging Métis spurring their buffalo-runners across the fields, trampling the precious wheat, barley and potatoes. For a while, the only sign of life left at the Selkirk Settlement was a salvage group of four Highlanders (John McLeod, Hugh McLean, Archibald Currie and James MacIntosh) who braved the taunts of the Métis to gather some of the abandoned tools and seed grains. Later, as if signalling some symbolic resurrection, the wheat, barley and potatoes did recover and ripen, unwatched, under the golden summer sun.

On his way from Montreal to reopen the Athabasca Country trade, the HBC's Colin Robertson had by chance met the Red River refugees and persuaded them to return just in time to harvest the crops. That autumn another group of Scottish immigrants arrived, led by Robert Semple, the colony's new governor. Semple was a Boston-born Loyalist and popular travel writer whose innocence of cunning was matched by his overburden of self-importance. His commission provided dramatic proof of the Nor'Westers' and Métis's contention that the Selkirk Settlement was little more than an agency of the HBC, since he had been simultaneously appointed the colony's new governor and chief of the Company's Northern and Southern departments. That fall and winter, Colin Robertson took it upon himself to woo the Métis. A rogue with rusty sideburns and a long nose that swung around menacingly like a compass needle, Robertson was six feet tall and not afraid of any man's shadow. He had gained well-deserved notoriety as a scrapper but never uttered an oath stronger than "Oh for the love of beaver!" The Don Quixote of the Fur Country, he was one of the few traders who had read most of Shakespeare's works and could recite the main soliloquies. He had spent much of his energy — both in the Northwest and during his visits to England — trying to persuade the

Hudson's Bay Company

A romantic depiction of Seven Oaks from the Hudson's Bay Company's calendar for 1914.

Bay men to drop their "slow, jog-trot manner" and adopt more of what he called "the glittering pomposity" of the Nor-Westers.

Robertson's entreaties to the Métis to remain neutral in the confrontation between the two fur companies worked mainly because Cuthbert Grant was not in residence at Red River, having moved to Qu'Appelle to be with the beloved Bethsy, as he called his wife, Elizabeth. Without him, there was no strong spokesman as a focus for their pride and heritage. On 17 March 1816, when Robertson attacked and temporarily captured Gibraltar, the NWC stronghold, and arrested Duncan Cameron, none of the Métis joined in the fort's defence. Inside Cameron's desk Robertson found documentary evidence that the Nor'Westers intended to engineer the final destruction of Selkirk's settlement that summer.

Robertson left the colony early in June, warning Semple to prepare for war. On the very day of his departure, the impulsive Semple ordered that the captured Fort Gibraltar be demolished. Some of the logs from its ramparts were rafted downstream to Fort Douglas, and whatever couldn't be moved was set ablaze. The Métis gathered in sullen clusters to watch the NWC stronghold burning. "The sight of the great fort in flames was too much," wrote Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, for "soon the fire which had been smouldering in every one of them also burst into flame. To each the destruction of the North West Company post was a warning of what might happen to his own small home. Like a prairie fire, news of the destruction of Fort Gibraltar raced from post to post, and from camp to camp wherever Métis and Indians gathered to hunt buffalo. The ancient war spirit of their Indian mothers, augmented by many a strain of fighting French and Highland Scots paternity, urged them to defend their existence; and the Nor'Westers were no longer in any mood to enforce restraint."

Here was the final, unforgivable act. Led by Cuthbert Grant, recently promoted by the NWC to be their "Captain-General," the Métis unfurled the New Nation's flag (blue with a horizontal figure 8 on its fly), cleaned their guns and waited.

Some friendly Saulteaux tried to warn Semple of the incipient dangers, but he would not listen. He did order one of his subordinates, the hard-drinking Lieutenant Ener Holte, late of the Swedish Navy, to arm the cannon on the colony's schooner. The thirty-five-foot keelboat, brought in from Norway House, was anchored at the mouth of the Red River to intercept incoming NWC canoes. In the tradition of his service, Holte saluted and delivered himself of a Nelsonian pledge: "I will be in my proper glory and will give the N.W. scoundrels a drubbing if I can!"

The target of Cuthbert Grant's first attack was the HBC installation at Brandon House, then commanded by Peter Fidler. After plundering the fort, Grant gathered his troops and, taking his orders from a group of

Nor'Westers recently arrived from Fort William, decided to run Semple's blockade at the Red River junction. He had with him sixty-two men, most of them done up in war paint. Thus began the assault on Red River. This was no longer an informal bunching of malcontents out to make trouble; this was an army on the march.

Inside Fort Douglas, Governor Semple had just received word of danger. Moustouche Boutino, a Métis who was on friendly terms with the settlers because Dr. James White, the colony's doctor, had treated his recent wound, had arrived to warn that Grant and his armed band were on their way to capture the fort. The governor ignored the warning even when, late in the afternoon of 19 June 1816, a lookout spotted the advancing troops.

Still convinced that diplomacy might win the day, Semple decided to meet these marauders and read them a proclamation forbidding Métis to commit acts of violence against the colony. He ordered Lieutenant Holte and Captain John Rogers of the Royal Engineers, who was serving as his second-in-command, to round up two dozen men to accompany him. Asked whether they should take the fort's three-pound field-piece with them, Semple replied that it would not be necessary: his only intention was to discover what the intruders wanted.

Grant and his mounted men had reached a cluster of trees known locally as Seven Oaks. The two groups met there in the early twilight of the late spring day. The Métis halted in half-moon formation. Semple and his men advanced in single file. And then all grew quiet — a silence more intense than the absence of noise, with even the sweet sounds of nature temporarily stilled. A horse snorted. The Métis, reinforced by new arrivals at the edges of their formation, began to tighten their half-circle, pressing Semple's irregulars towards the river bank. Grant signalled one of his subalterns, a Métis named François Firmin Boucher, to order the governor and his men to lay down their arms or they would be shot. As Boucher urged his horse forward, Grant covered Semple with his gun. The stilted dialogue that followed caught the supercharged tensions of the moment:

"What do you want?" asked Boucher.

"What do *you* want?" demanded the affronted governor.

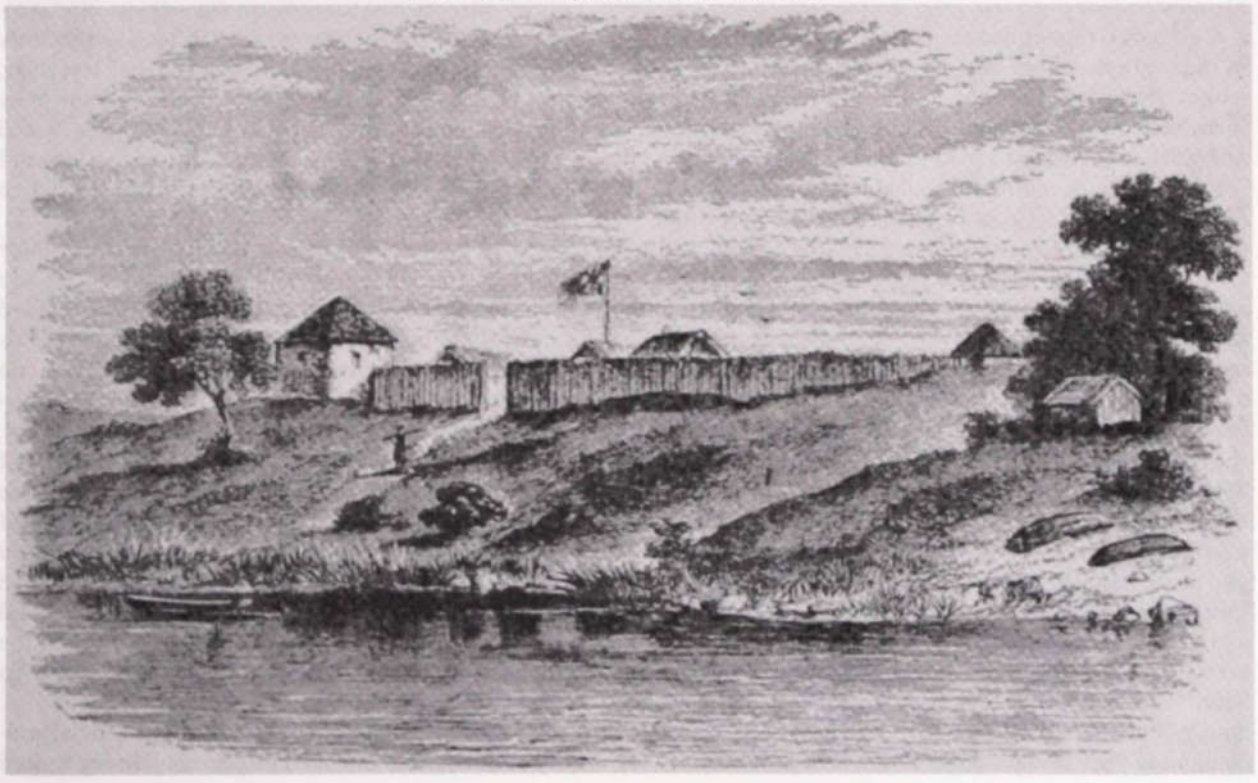
"We want our fort." was the spitting reply.

"Well, *go* to your fort!" Semple snapped back.

"Why have you destroyed our fort? You damned rascal!"

No Métis was going to call him, Governor of Rupert's Land, a rascal. Semple shouted something like "Scoundrel? Do *you* tell me so?" and made a grab for

Fort Douglas 1817, from a sketch by Lord Selkirk.



Public Archives of Canada

Robert Semple.

the stock of Boucher's gun while seizing the reins of his horse.

Cuthbert Grant pulled the trigger, wounding Semple in the thigh, and that shot set off the slaughter. Lieutenant Holte was the first to die. As if pulled by an invisible string, the Métis slid down behind their horses and levelled their guns across the animals' backs, while the Fort Douglas contingent milled in confusion around Semple to see if he was badly hurt. They were thus exposed to the full fury of the Métis cross-fire, and they began to die, returning random fire as best they could. When the Métis threw themselves on the ground to reload, the Semple survivors thought they had all been felled and with a cheer threw their hats in the air. Before those hats had landed, another multiple blast resounded. Rogers, the Royal Engineer, charged the Métis with his bayonet and was halted in his tracks, dying on his knees.

Within fifteen minutes, Semple had been killed by a Métis named François Deschamps, who placed his gun against the governor's chest and pulled the trigger. Twenty of his men lay dead at Seven Oaks. Only one of the Métis had been killed and only one prisoner taken — John Pritchard, an NWC deserter now in Selkirk's service, who feigned death, then begged for mercy, and was used by Grant to deliver a surrender demand to Fort Douglas. The settlement gave in without resistance, terminating the Selkirk Settlement for the second time in two years as its inhabitants departed once again to their temporary shelters at the north end of Lake Winnipeg.

But the day's horror was not yet done. At Seven Oaks, the bodies of the dead were stripped and dismembered in an orgy of mutilation. The best summing up of that chilling encounter is by Don McLean of the Gabriel Dumont Institute: "The nameless, faceless directors of the Hudson's Bay Company had placed the Highland Scots and Irish labourers into the mouth of a loaded gun; the Métis hunters, dupes of the North West Company, joyfully pulled the trigger."

Those fifteen minutes at Seven Oaks changed everything. No longer a commercial contest with the occasional skirmish and post-burning, the struggle between the Nor'Westers and Bay men had turned into a guerrilla war, fought along a four-thousand-mile front with unreliable troops and scheming generals. The Northwest became a land to flee across, as leaders of both sides gradually realized victory was impossible. Success would be determined by survival.

What changed most was that for the first time in the long rivalry between the two companies, the fur trade itself had become subordinate to their struggle for supremacy. No restraint or discipline was applied to the trapping of the beaver (even their sucklings were being skinned), to the distribution of rum and brandy (any excess was permissible) or the tactics used in pillaging competitors' forts (at one point forty-two murder charges had been sworn out against Nor'Westers). Because the social contract had been so blatantly flouted, Lord Bathurst, the British colonial secretary, moved to appoint a commission to investigate the mass murders, and the Governor-in-Chief of Canada issued a royal proclamation on 1 May 1817, in the name of the Prince Regent, against "open warfare in the Indian Territories."

Selkirk himself had meanwhile returned to Lower Canada during the autumn of 1815 to introduce Lady Selkirk to Montreal society. He hired a lawyer named Samuel Gale to protect his interests and had discussions about the fur trade with the NWC's William McGillivray. After preliminary negotiating skirmishes, Selkirk was handed an astonishing proposal: the two companies should merge for a trial period of seven years, with the Montrealers supplying two-thirds of the goods and capital (and receiving two-thirds of the profits) while the Hudson's Bay Company retained the balance as a junior partner. The scheme was turned down because of the proportions being demanded and the NWC's reluctance to recognize the validity of the HBC charter, but the idea of amalgamation had been broached.

Having requested and been denied an official military escort for his intended inspection journey to Red

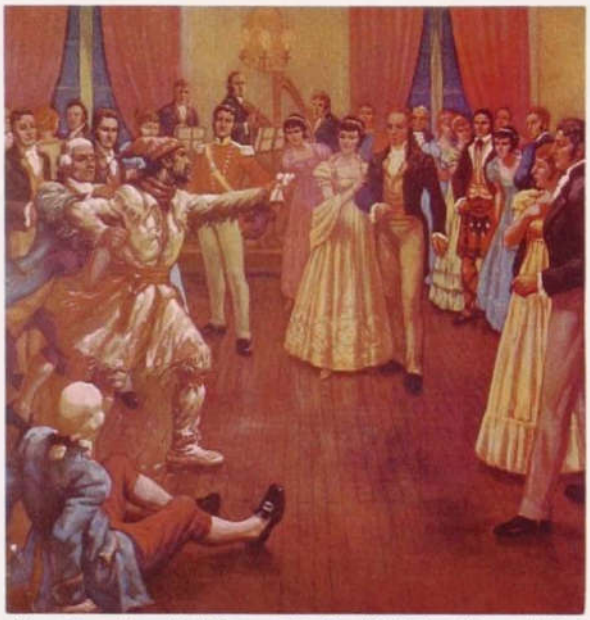
River, Selkirk recruited instead four officers and a hundred members of the de Meuron and de Wattville regiments — Swiss, German and Middle European mercenaries who, after fighting in the Napoleonic battles, had been detoured to Malta and brought to Canada during the War of 1812. They accepted Selkirk's offer of free land at Red River in return for military service as it might be required, and the expedition moved west. Selkirk had himself sworn in as a justice of the peace, hired a hundred voyageurs, arranged for the canoes, and set off; he planned to bypass Fort William, hoping to reach his troubled settlement without provoking the Nor'Westers. He left Montreal in mid-June of 1816, and it was at Sault Ste Marie that news of the Seven Oaks killings reached his party. At this point Selkirk's tuberculosis was so far advanced that his accompanying physician, Dr. John Allan, hesitated to pass on the gruesome details. But when Selkirk heard the facts, he vowed to lead his mercenary band against the very heart of the villainous Montrealers' enterprise by capturing their great depot at Fort William.

On 12 August 1816, after most of the winterers had departed westward, Selkirk's armed flotilla swept out of Lake Superior and set up camp on the bank opposite the fort's main gate. Selkirk soon learned that William McGillivray himself was among the fifteen senior Montreal partners in residence and charged him with treason, conspiracy, and being an accessory to murder.

Hardly able to credit the outrageous message from Selkirk's emissary, McGillivray, accompanied by two of his senior lieutenants, Dr. John McLoughlin and Kenneth McKenzie, decided to humour his visitors and pay what he imagined would be a routine courtesy call on this crazed aristocrat who seemed unaware of who ruled these woods. Selkirk promptly had the trio arrested. McGillivray submitted to the indignities, whispering loudly enough to be heard that it really was a dishonour to be fooled by this "piddling lord." Selkirk then ordered one of his assistants, John McNab, late of the Glengarry Fencibles, to arrest the twelve other partners still known to be at Fort William. McNab later remembered the ensuing events as follows: "We landed, and proceeded to the gate, as before, where several of the proprietors were standing and a number of men (their servants) and many Indians were assembled. The warrant was served on two of the

Types of Selkirk Settler in the year 1822, from a nineteenth century drawing.

Hudson's Bay Company



News of trouble at Red River reaches Lord Selkirk at Montreal, New Year's Eve, 1815, from a painting for the Hudson's Bay Company by A. Sherriff Scott.

gentlemen, but, on approaching the third, resistance was actually made, and a declaration uttered, that no further submission would be given to the execution of my duty, till Mister M'Gillivray was given up. In consequence I was nearly shut out of the fort by attempts to close one leaf of the gates. . . . At this moment I expressed the necessity of support to Captain D'Orsonnens [the de Meuron commander], who with much alacrity, aided by several of his men, instantly rushed in, and prevented the gate from being closed. . . . They ran forward, and, in a moment, took possession of two small cannons that were placed in the court within the gate."

The partners were herded into the Great Hall. They stood there beneath the bust of their patron saint, Simon McTavish, not quite sure whether to laugh or cry at the antics of this wearisome and apparently deranged Scottish earl. But Selkirk was in no mood to be gentle with anyone representing the North West Company. As far as he was concerned, these vicious woodsmen had murdered twenty-one of his people, and he was determined to "cut up by the roots one of the most abominable combinations that was ever suffered to exist in the British Dominions." He ordered the detainees to produce their papers, hoping to find evidence proving they had been responsible for ordering Cuthbert Grant's attack. But weakened by his illness and the day's excitement, Selkirk could not continue the interrogation. He impounded the documents and had seals placed on their containers, naïvely admonishing these "agents of infamy" not to touch the files until next morning.

Barely was he out of the door on his way to rest at his camp across from the fort when the Nor'Westers began to scurry around frantically gathering up the documents by the armload, pitching them into the oversized stove of the Great Hall's kitchen. All night the papers burned, shooting sparks into the starlit sky. "The news of Seven Oaks," John Morgan Gray, the best of the Selkirk historians, has speculated, "meant much more guilt than most were prepared to shoulder. The group seems to have behaved as if morality were a matter of being found out; judged on this basis, they were guilty of a great wrong." That night, the Nor'Westers stealthily placed guns in hidden caches on the property for a possible attack on the Selkirk camp.

Alexander Fraser, the NWC blacksmith who had spent such a pungent eternity in the fort's privy-like prison, deserted the next morning, crossed over to the enemy camp, and told Selkirk about the bonfire of documents and the hidden arms. The guns were soon discovered and confiscated, and a careful search of the partners' premises turned up an overlooked fragment of incriminating evidence in the form of a list of the rewards presented by the NWC to the Métis who had participated at Seven Oaks. After a desultory attempt to interrogate the Nor'Westers, Selkirk sent them back to Montreal under guard, with only one partner, a weak-kneed boozer named Daniel McKenzie, staying behind. The departing partners suspected him of being a turncoat, and as they were being pushed into the canoes, Kenneth McKenzie (no relation) whispered to Daniel McKenzie: "If ever I am acquitted [of murder], I'll blow out your brains!" (The threat was never carried out because Kenneth McKenzie and eight others were drowned on Lake Superior during the return trip to Montreal.)

Realizing that his ravaged colony at Red River could not hope to feed his accompanying army, Selkirk decided to winter at Fort William. He moved into the partners' suites adjoining the Great Hall and, walking about that alien fort, felt a long way from the elegant mansion at St. Mary's Isle. His only consolation during the dreary winter was the correspondence he received from his beloved wife, Jean, in Montreal. "Everything in your expedition turns out for the best," she reported, cheerfully putting the best face on the situation, "and last of all the great armada, with all the warrants and constables, partners, clerks, Iroquois and guns and Congreve rockets, melts away and disappears, and a little canoe comes dropping in now and then, and one after another of the partners return to Montreal looking very foolish, while all the world are laughing at them."

Using some fairly dubious tactics, Selkirk persuaded the faltering Daniel McKenzie to approve sale of the fort's food stores for £3,000, then dispatched his mer-

cenaries westward to recapture Fort Douglas. This they accomplished in a surprise night attack without firing a shot, rushing the fort under the cloud-concealed moon and scaling its walls using pre-cut tree branches. The victorious troops captured several other NWC outposts, notifying the settlers who had scattered north towards Lake Winnipeg after the Seven Oaks débâcle that they could return to their land. By June they were joined by Lord Selkirk himself. Here at last, more than half a decade after he had first dreamed of providing a sanctuary for his beleaguered crofters. Selkirk was able to see for himself the hardship they had faced and the small promise their situation held out to them. Seized by the feverish exhilaration of his disease and the infectious beauty of the prairie summer, he walked among his people like a kilted messiah, granting freedom from further land payments to some two dozen of his most deserving disciples.

By early autumn, knowing that he must deal with the barrage of charges and countercharges stemming from his illegal occupation of Fort William, Lord Selkirk returned eastward to face the uneven scales of Canadian justice.

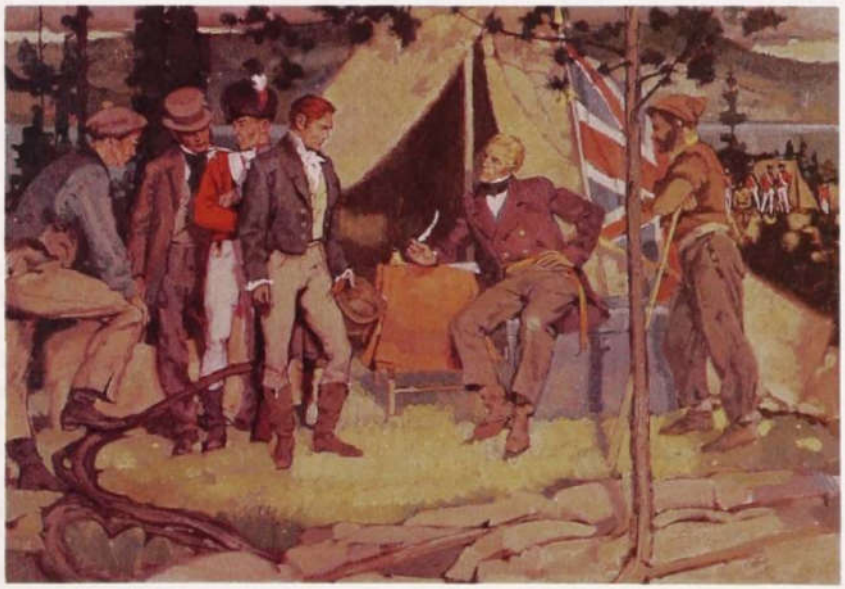
The turmoil at Red River had galvanized the Hudson's Bay Company into unaccustomed activity. Since the survival of the colony continued to menace the NWC's supply lines, this was the moment for the HBC to strike at Athabasca itself, the heart of the northwestern fur trade. Because that distant territory clearly lay beyond Prince Rupert's 1670 charter, the Nor'Westers had long regarded its fur-rich stretches as their own.

Selkirk's vivid exploits had demonstrated the vulnerability of the Montreal traders and instilled in the HBC officers and servants renewed vitality and pride of place. They felt ready at last to challenge their rivals in their home territory. Besides, a recent analysis of returns by individual posts had yielded the unexpected information that even those stations most fiercely competing with the NWC for a share of the catch were showing higher profits than the peaceful but fur-poor forts around Hudson Bay.

During the five years after Seven Oaks, the continent-wide rivalry between the NWC and HBC was nowhere contested more bitterly than within the Athabasca Country. Here the last violent clashes between the two companies determined the outcome of their protracted quarrel.

Athabasca became the Culloden of the fur-trade wars.

Infuriated by Selkirk's capture of Fort William, the Nor'Westers immediately seized the five tiny posts the Bay men had established in Athabasca during their tentative 1815 foray. That expedition, originally led by Colin Robertson, who broke away to help lead the settlers back to Red River, ended in disaster. Command was assumed by John Clarke, a thirty-four-year-old Montrealer with the nasty habit of flicking specks of gunpowder into his opponents' eyes. He had served a decade in Athabasca as a clerk with the NWC, leaving it to join Astor's Pacific Fur Company, and had come within a hair's breadth of being scalped after he hanged an Indian for stealing a silver goblet in the Spokane River country and was attacked by the victim's brothers seeking revenge. He returned to Montreal, where Robertson hired him, mainly for his fighting ways. Nicknamed "Bon Garçon," Clarke loved



The arrest of William McGillivray by Lord Selkirk, August 1816, from a painting by Don Anderson for the Hudson's Bay Company.

The Countess of Selkirk.

swinging the diamond-studded cane given to him by John Jacob Astor — especially in the thick of a fight.

Clarke had launched the Company's return to Athabasca by building Fort Wedderburn on Potato Island, right across the channel from the Nor'Westers' headquarters at Fort Chipewyan. It was moved when Samuel Black, the NWC bully who had so thoroughly tormented Peter Fidler, drew a line in the sand and dared any Bay man to cross it. Three did and were "fatally pricked in the body." Clarke constructed several other small trading outlets on Great Slave Lake and up along the Athabasca River. Then he took fifty canoemen up the Peace to establish the Company's presence there. He carried no supplies, hoping to catch enough game along the way to keep them alive, but the Nor'Westers chased the animals from his route and threatened any Indians willing to help feed them. The embargo worked so well that sixteen Bay men eventually starved to death, bringing the Company's seasonal death toll in Athabasca to nineteen, close to the Seven Oaks total. By the time Clarke and his desperate survivors stumbled back to Fort Wedderburn, all the HBC posts had been captured and Black arrested the Bay men for theft. (Some Nor'Westers had planted small quantities of pemmican in the path of the starving men, and it was this food, which they had gobbled down, that provided the excuse for the arrests.) They were allowed to depart only when they took an oath to stay away from Athabasca for another two years. By the summer of 1818, the Athabasca venture had cost the HBC three dozen lives and £50,000. Yet the Company was barely able to retain one tiny fishing camp in the area.

Realizing that only a massive assault could turn the tide, the HBC commissioned Colin Robertson to lead an attack brigade of nearly two hundred armed men into the disputed territory. The flotilla was equipped to Robertson's extravagant tastes, with plenty of buffalo tongues and kegs of Madeira. "The lady with the ring in her nose is now holding a plum cake and with her delicate brown fingers is picking out the fruit," reads an enigmatic entry in the journal of his voyage west.

His determination (and Madeira) quickly proved effective in attracting the Indians; within weeks of his arrival, Robertson had restored Fort Wedderburn and was trading with four dozen Indian chiefs who had previously been loyal NWC customers. The Montrealers called in reinforcements, led by Simon McGillivray, Jr., the Mixed Blood son of that company's reigning grandee. But the day-to-day harassment was, as usual, left to the malevolent Samuel Black — though sometimes with mixed results. "Black the Nor'Wester is now in his glory leading his bullies," Robertson noted. "Every evening they come over to our fort in a body, calling on our men to come out and fight pitched battles. One of their hair-pulling bullies got his challenge accepted and an unmerciful thrashing to boot from a little Frenchman of ours — Boucher. . . . Our men are in high spirits. The Indians have regained confidence in us and boldly leave the Nor'Westers every day for the Hudson's Bay."

Then, on 11 October 1818, while Robertson was outside the HBC fort reading the funeral service for one of his men who had been drowned in a fishing accident, Black, accompanied by the young McGillivray, seized him at gunpoint and bundled him off into Fort Chipewyan. Robertson's diary vividly described his arrival inside the enemy camp: "Landing, I dashed for their Indian Hall and at once . . . called on the Indians, representing that the cowardly attack was an effort to reduce *them* to slavery; but Black rushed up to stop me. Seizing a fork on the hall table I kept the vagabond at bay. I loaded him with every abuse and evil name I could think of, then to the Indians: 'Do not abandon the Hudson's Bay on this

account! There are brave men at our fort to protect you! That fellow was not brave enough to *seize* me; he *stole* me, and he would now rob you of your hunt if it were not for the young men I have left in my fort. Tell Clarke not to be discouraged. We will be revenged for this, but not like wolves prowling in the bushes. We will capture them as we captured them at Fort William, with the sun shining on our faces.' At this moment, the Indian chief came up and squeezing my hand, whispered, 'Never mind, white man, we are your friends.' "

Robertson was soon pinioned and confined inside a small shack next to the fort's privy. There he stayed for eight months. Apart from not having access to his Madeira (or ladies with rings in their noses), Robertson's main worry was that his troops had been left leaderless. Daily operational decisions had to be made to maintain and expand the HBC's beachhead. He persuaded his captors to allow him a keg of Madeira and devised a complex but literate code for sending out messages: "I began to arrange all our Posts, Gentlemen, Principal men with those of opponents in numbers, then all the monosyllables on which the meaning of a sentence rested, also sentences intimately connected with the affairs of this country . . . until my numerical figures amounted to 600. When the cypher was completed, the most difficult task remained, to convey the copy to my friends at Fort Wedderburn, which was effected by means of a small keg. First the cypher was written on long strips of paper having a pretty large margin on each side, then rolled up so tight as not to admit water beyond the first fold. Both ends were sealed; this finished, I perforated a small hole with a bent gun worm close by the bung, through which I passed a piece of holland twine, then hooked it up from the bunghole and attached to the end of the twine my Packet, repassed it through the bunghole, drew it up from the small aperture close to the stave of the keg. To fasten the letter I drove a small peg into the hole, over which I rubbed a little dust, that neither the hole nor the sound of paper could either be seen or heard."

That may have been ingenious, but there was no way for Robertson to inform his men how to locate the message — or to tell them there was a message there at all. The empty barrel was flushed out and put into storage without being examined for its hidden contents. Robertson next requested his personal volume of Shakespeare. He devised another code by annotating *King Henry IV,* and his men soon caught on. But he was eventually spotted scribbling out the coded instructions, and the Nor'Westers decided to pack him off to Montreal, still under arrest. On the way, the canoe in which he was travelling overturned in the rapids at Ile-à-la-Crosse. No foul play was ever proved, but two of his NWC guards, both expert swimmers, mysteriously drowned, while a smiling Robertson bobbed out of the stream and waded to shore. He made his escape when they were passing Cumberland House by the simple stratagem of asking, on his word of honour, if he could step inside the HBC fort to say his farewells. Once inside, Robertson had the doors bolted and refused to come out. The angry Nor'Westers continued on without him.

In one of the messages he had managed to sneak past his guards during his imprisonment, Robertson had warned William Williams, the HBC's recently appointed Governor of Rupert's Land, that the Nor'West partners would probably be returning to Montreal loaded with furs and could be ambushed at Grand Rapids, the rendezvous near the juncture of the Saskatchewan River and Lake Winnipeg. This was a popular resting place for the NWC brigades heading east; while the voyageurs took the canoes through the rapids, the *bourgeois* could stroll down the portage trail swapping the tittle-tattle of the fur trade.

Williams, who had received the Robertson dispatch, was a new breed within the HBC's service. Because the Company was now engaged in war as much as in trade, it hired this truculent former East India Company sea captain to look after its affairs. As successor to the murdered Robert Semple, Williams required little motivation for the fight with the Nor'Westers. On the strength of Robertson's message, he left Red River aboard the colony's armed schooner with a detachment of twenty de Meuron soldiers, cannon loaded, and a sheaf of warrants. As the annual NWC brigades arrived at Grand Rapids, the accompanying *bourgeois* were apprehended by Williams's troopers. The trap netted five senior NWC partners, including Benjamin Frobisher, the son of an NWC founder. Each was spirited away to a temporary enclosure on a nearby mosquito-infested island. One of the partners, pleading a call of nature, disappeared in the bush. To thwart pursuit, he left a suicide note claiming he had drowned himself by jumping into the lake with a stone tied around his neck. That was not a brilliant improvisation because the lake at that point was only two feet deep, but no one went after him. The remaining prisoners were eventually taken to York Factory, but Frobisher, who escaped along the way, starved to death trying to get to the NWC post at Moose Lake.

The Grand Rapids affair (and the fact that along with the partners and the loads of fur, Williams captured documents incriminating the NWC in Seven Oaks and other incidents) seriously undermined the Montrealers' morale. "Our opponents," Robertson wrote to Williams, "have lowered their tone; they talk now of conducting their business on amicable principles. . . . The North West Company's servants have

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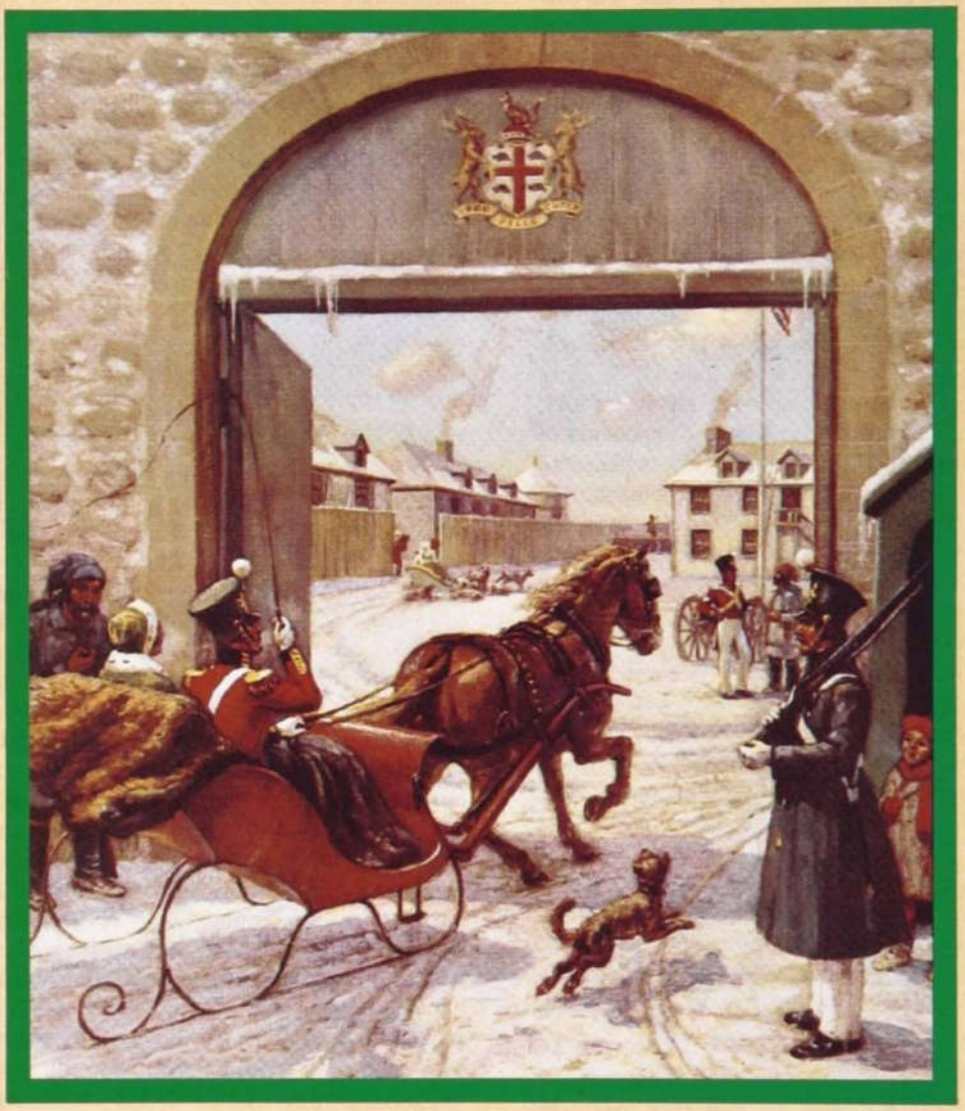

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Lord Selkirk.

Colin Robertson.

story of a junction in their heads . . . whatever their prospects may be, there is certainly a great change in their conduct; the affair of the Grand Rapids has not so much as produced a menace."

But the North West Company was not done yet. Outraged by Williams's behaviour, its partners promptly issued warrants for his arrest. During the following summer the Nor'Westers mounted their own ambush at Grand Rapids and were highly pleased when Colin Robertson, on his way east from a winter on the Peace River, fell into their hands. He was arrested and kept under close guard in preparation for shipment to Lower Canada.

Well aware that there were more warrants papering Montreal courtrooms calling for his arrest as soon as he stuck a foot into Lower Canada's jurisdiction, Robertson again mustered his natural talent for survival. He escaped by flinging a dish of biscuits in his captors' faces during a meal break and, after holding them off with a stolen gun, made a run for the U.S. border. Once in New York, he immediately sailed for London to participate in the negotiations rumoured to be leading towards amalgamation of the two fur-trading concerns. On his way across the Atlantic aboard the Western Ocean packet *Albion,* he found himself in the company of two arch-enemies, the NWC partners Dr. John McLoughlin and Angus Bethune. As the ship was about to land and the passengers were lining up to sign chits for gratuities to the dining-room stewards, Robertson and his friend, a Roman Catholic monsignor, happened to be standing between Bethune and McLoughlin.

"Come, [Abbé]," chided the irrepressible Robertson, "put down your name; I don't like to sign between two North Westers."

"Never mind, Mr. R.," came the reply. "Remember our Saviour was crucified between two thieves."

At the end of his Red River visit, Lord Selkirk, Robertson's hero, was struggling to extricate himself from the final and most traumatic episode of his Canadian misadventures. He had spent most of the interval since returning from that brief happy summer at Red River in stultifying courtrooms, first in Montreal and later at York (Toronto), pursuing the 170 charges he

had preferred against the NWC and its partners. Characteristically, he entertained no doubts about their total guilt and his utter innocence, yet he was being forced to justify his own actions.

Selkirk spent, besides his time and the last of his energies, £100,000 out of his own pocket (and another £40,000 out of the HBC's) defending himself against a bewildering array of mischievously worded charges, trying to extract justice from a variety of contemptuous witnesses, corrupt judges and a colonial administration barely able to suppress its fervent wish to be rid of him. "If we are to be poor for three generations," the faithful Lady Selkirk wrote to her husband, "we must absolutely fight this out." Although the grand juries returned eighteen true bills against various NWC partners and associates, only one man was found guilty, and his sentence was never carried out. Not a single marksman from Seven Oaks was convicted of anything. Cuthbert Grant jumped bail and escaped by canoe back to Red River. All charges against him were later quietly dropped.

The bewildered Selkirk at first blamed the fact that most of the magistrates sitting in judgment over him were either associates or relatives of the Nor'Westers he had brought to trial, but other weighty factors were in play. Selkirk's quixotic idealism threatened the sanctity of Lower Canada's social and economic establishment, dominated as it was by the partners and agents of the North West Company. When the trial's venue was moved to York, Selkirk encountered the equally vehement opposition of the Family Compact, that self-perpetuating oligarchy of reactionary judges, bureaucrats, politicians and theologians. These unyielding clusters of privilege were abetted in their anti-Selkirk efforts by the Colonial Office in London. Its secretary, Lord Bathurst, and more particularly his influential Under-Secretary, Henry Goulburn, openly favoured the NWC's claims, though both men tended to dismiss the feud as a routine commercial quarrel. One of Bathurst's dispatches, accidentally included in a sheaf of papers delivered to Selkirk, urged the attorney-general of Quebec to ensure the Scottish lord's prosecution and conviction.

Selkirk's London supporters took his case directly to the British prime minister, Lord Liverpool, hoping to bypass Bathurst and Goulburn, but the Family Compact's influence turned out to be too powerful. John Strachan, the rector of York's St. James's Church, who also served on the colony's executive council and could claim the moral leadership of his circle, attacked Selkirk for being an irresponsible land speculator who had lured the poor Scottish settlers into a "polar region where even the minimal agriculture economy was impossible" since Red River was fit only as "a residence for uncivilized man." Strachan and his supporters saw in Selkirk's progressive views and colonial ambitions a threat to their own positions, believing that even if successful, the Red River Settlement "was so completely isolated from British civilization that, in the interests of mere survival, it would gravitate toward the southern republic." At the end of the lengthy litigation, Selkirk was assessed £2,000 for damages while not a single Nor'Wester was fined or imprisoned. Not waiting to hear this ludicrous verdict announced, Selkirk had returned to London, his health finally broken. "For pity's sake," Lady Selkirk begged her husband, "make up your mind to let the wicked flourish; they cannot take from us our own good conscience, and if we do not allow them to bereave us of health and tranquility, we can be happy without the right being proved."

But it was too late. His chronic consumption, seriously aggravated by the courtroom ordeal, had left her husband hardly able to breathe without retching blood. Following the practice of the day, doctors applied leeches to reduce his blood flow, but that only weakened him further. When his brother-in-law, James Wedderburn, objected that funds from his dangerously reduced estate were still flowing into Red River, Selkirk dictated a reply that might have been his valedictory: ". . . my honour is at stake in the contest with the North West Company and in the support of the settlement at Red River. Till that can be said to be fairly out of danger and till the infamous falsehoods of the North West Company are finally and fully exposed, expenses must be incurred which it is utterly impossible to avoid. . . . It is to be hoped that this state of things will soon be over, and when that is the case I will retire to St. Mary's Isle and live on sixpence a day till I am out of debt."

His time was running out. Selkirk's illness was claiming so much of him that in September 1819 he was forced to leave England for the drier climate of Pau in the Pyrenees foothills of southwestern France, accompanied only by his doctor and the stalwart Jean. In the half-year remaining to him, Selkirk tried to reconstruct how the tumble of events had soured his generously motivated Red River venture.

He died on the morning of 8 April 1820, not yet forty-nine. Because Pau had no Protestant cemetery, he was buried in a plot at nearby Orthez, between two oak trees. Probates revealed that his once-magnificent estate consisted of £160,000 in debts plus the bankrupt kingdom on the Red River.

It had been Lord Selkirk's fate to juggle desirable ends with destructive means, and he had not always made the right judgment calls. Perhaps his greatest sin was that he believed too fervently in his difficult cause, and thus lost the objectivity to create the ameliorating circumstances that might have allowed it to flourish. In the end, he lost everything except the self-esteem that mattered more to him than life itself. ◆

Mainstream and Periphery In Canadian History

By J.M. Bumsted

Although one might never know it from the well-paid and complacent academic historians frequenting university commons rooms in Canada, there is enormous ferment and turmoil lurking just beneath the surface of Canadian historiography. Interestingly enough, the principal factor in what could well be a major revolution in the writing and publishing of Canadian history is the micro-computer and its ever sophisticating software, that now put the possibility of becoming a publisher in the hands of each and every author.

While there is obviously an enormous gap between self-publication and bringing the products of such publication to the attention of the reading public, the potentiality for a grassroots revolt against the professional academic historians who have for the past two generations controlled the production of Canadian history is enormous. The academic establishment is not yet quite in disarray, but it clearly is on the defensive. It has begun the usual process of raising the professional stakes needed to play in the game, with the main granting agency in history, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRCC) now insisting that otherwise qualified applicants acquire doctorates before being eligible for grants. The Canadian Historical Association has now recognized the importance of publications outside the realm of the national commercial and academic presses, and attempts to encourage "quality" through the awarding of prizes in "regional history," a veritable dog's breakfast of a concept that does little honour to the association, but does put the distinction where the academic establishment thinks it should be. Real Canadian historians write "national history" as it has been imparted to them at the graduate schools, and the hackers produce "regional history."

Leaving aside the question of how many of our most important and insightful scholars now work on the local, provincial, or regional level, there remains the problem of coming to terms with the vast outpouring of small presses and do-it-yourself publications now appearing on the market, works often written outside academic canons and standards. The majority of the works considered in this review fall into this category in one sense or another. They are published with high hopes that are then dashed by both the balkanization of this country and the failure of its vaunted cultural policies to overcome the resultant problems of communication. At best they can expect reviews or notices in the immediate vicinity of the residence of the author or the place of publication, at worst they will scarcely be noticed by anyone at all. Yet what they demonstrate is that — despite all the obstacles and pitfalls in their way — some Canadians outside the halls of academe do have a sense of history, and are doing their best to bring it to public attention. Most of these books will not be available in your friendly local bookstore (much less the national chain retailers), but they should be.

Ben W. Powell's *Labrador by Choice: An Autobiography of Survival and Trapping in Labrador* was published by Jesperson Press, a regional firm that has produced a number of interesting and important works over the past few years. As its title suggests, it deals with the life of one Labrador trapper, mainly from the mid-1930s to the 1950s. What no title can indicate is that the author is a genuine character whose life, while hard scrabbling, was one of continual fascination. Powell is not a great writer, but his autobiography has been set down in an oral style that seems perfectly consistent with the man. He is repetitious, and hardly one for understatement, but he tells us more about fur trapping, settlement in modern Labrador, and the courage constantly displayed by Canadians in wilderness country than a shelf of academic treatises.

Perhaps the most fascinating part of a very intriguing book is Powell's account of founding and organizing

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a settlement/community on the Labrador coast in the 1950s. His story makes clear both that pioneering did not die in Canada sometime in the nineteenth century and that the problems of establishing communities in remote areas have not changed appreciably over the centuries. Although the founders of Charlottetown may have had eventual access to some aspects of modern technology, their success was due chiefly to perseverance and patience. Powell was clearly a man of considerable vision and leadership capacity, and the reader is actually pleased that he recognizes at an early date the potentiality of the snowmobile and becomes one of Labrador's leading dealers. This autobiography should introduce his fellow Canadians to one of this century's most intriguing figures, and one can only hope that those in charge of honours lists such as the Order of Canada have the book and its author called to their attention. For those readers interested in the Canadian North, as well as for all readers who want a great story well told within the Canadian oral tradition, this book is a must. I cannot recommend it too highly.

Turning from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast, Donald Graham's *Lights of the Inside Passage* is another production of a regional publisher that is full of endless fascination for the reader. I approached the book with some trepidation, but soon found myself immersed in its intricacies with great enjoyment. Graham has some academic training, but he has spent the last decade as a lighthouse keeper in British Columbia. No one understands better the special psychology it requires to become a keeper, or the peculiar physical demands of the job. Moreover, Graham has had the good fortune to unearth some of the most interesting government files in Canada, full of marvellous letters from an occupational group that were — almost by definition — eccentrics with a good many grievances and often the time to commit them to paper.

No one would claim that lighthouse keepers are "typical Canadians," but their experiences are often not dissimilar from those of many other Canadians of every generation who have taken up employment under conditions of extreme isolation and general hardship. And some of them are splendidly articulate. Among Graham's collection of keepers is Mary Jane Croft, by 1932 the senior lighthouse keeper in British Columbia, whose thirty years of struggle to maintain her own high standards of responsibility were hardly met by those who employed her. The tale of her quest for a decent pension reminds us how difficult old age must have been for our ancestors. She finally left Discovery Island for Victoria in 1932, with a cheque for six months' pay and a pension of $43.00 per month. The man she had employed as her assistant (out of her salary) had no pension at all.

The trials and tribulations of George Watson and his wife on Portlock Point offer yet another example of "poor diet, damp conditions, and too many sleepless nights." Unable to afford to leave his post for medical attention, Watson responded to an attempt to remove him by "beating the bed with a cane and acting like a lunatic." Not surprisingly, Watson responded in 1919 to an article in a Montreal newspaper about the soft life of the Dominion's lighthouse keepers with anger:

> I would say our honourable Governor general gets a salary of one hundred thousand a year and he is a British lord about fifteen hundred a week to live on while I get fifty eight dollars a month to support my self and family on. It is time [for] every working man to think who makes the high cost of living and not blaim the farmer who we all look to for our bread and meat.

Recognizing that he would be "condemned as a Russian Bolshiviki by the Government [and] as an Agitator," Watson nonetheless called for an uprising against "the men that sits in Ottawa and gambles on the necessaries of life as they are doing at this very time." His superiors admitted that the salary was "not sufficient to support a lightkeeper and family," but there were no increases. Watson continued to fulminate for years in angry correspondence. The author has many such stories to tell and files from which to quote. One can

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LABRADOR BY CHOICE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SURVIVAL AND TRAPPING IN LABRADOR.

By Ben W. Powell. St. John's, Jesperson Press, 1984. 200 pp., illus. $10.95.

LIGHTS OF THE INSIDE PASSAGE: A HISTORY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S LIGHTHOUSES AND THEIR KEEPERS

By Donald Graham. Madeira Park, B.C., Harbour Publishing Co., 1986. 267 pp., illus. (price unavailable).

NASTAWGAN: THE CANADIAN NORTH BY CANOE & SNOWSHOE

Edited by Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs. Toronto, Betegeuse Books, 1985. 231 pp., illus. (price unavailable).

EASTERN PASSAGE TO THE ALASKA HIGHWAY

By Earl Gingrich. Winterburn, Alberta, Earl Gingrich Marketing, 1986. 320 pp., illus. (price unavailable).

THE ALASKA HIGHWAY: PAPERS OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM

Edited by Kenneth Coates. Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1985. 208 pp., illus. $22.95.

CANADA, 1900-1945

By Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, John English. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1987. 427 pp., illus. $27.50.

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only hope that he will someday edit a full collection of lighthouse keeper correspondence. In the meantime, we have this splendid book, copiously illustrated, to remind us of the pain and exploitation of some Canadians in the past.

Not all Canadians, of course, have viewed wilderness isolation in terms of permanent lifestyles or ways of making a living. *Nastawagan* is a book about recreational and non-commercial uses of the northern regions of the nation, focussing principally upon the development of recreational canoeing and the meaning of wilderness for those who practise it. The work's editors and authors are persuaded that the northern wilderness is of vital significance for all Canadians, including those who escape to it only briefly from urban conditions in the southern districts. Within this collection of essays are to be found a variety of different reasons for wilderness travel on the parts of a variety of people, ranging from early explorers to determined women adventurers to vacationing recreationists. In their introduction, the editors offer some suggestive points and summaries of the contents, but could have gone much further in providing a context for the major themes. Especially noticeable in its absence is a lengthy analysis of the changing recreational usage of the Canadian wilderness, a shifting pattern of continual democratization and escape from the urbanization that has so dominated the past century. Missing also is a recognition that recreationists and residents of the northern wilderness have different agendas for development. Nevertheless, these essays constitute much food for thought about our northern landscape and its inhabitants.

Earl Gingrich's *Eastern Passage to the Alaska Highway* is a self-published autobiography. Gingrich has written a far more formalized and "educated" autobiography than Ben Powell, and the work suffers from a degree of self-consciousness absent in Powell's book. Given its aspirations, the reader becomes far more conscious of its limitations and especially the need for a firm editorial hand. But Gingrich succeeds in demonstrating that most of us have in our personal histories the raw material for an autobiography. Like many westerners, he has been constantly on the move, constantly seeking new experiences in new jobs. Gingrich gives us his impressions of summer harvesting, of the RCAF, of driving trucks during the construction of the Alcan Highway, of running a northern cafe, of building the Northern Alberta Railway, of salmon fishing in B.C., of working in the oilfields and several other construction projects — mostly in the winter and mainly to assist a marginal farm operation. Unlike Ben Powell or most of the lighthouse keepers, Gingrich appears to have seen the north almost purely in secondary economic terms; it provided jobs to supplement his income. Eventually he settles down as a vocational instructor in the Edmonton schools. Gingrich probably represents the majority of the floating population of the wilderness at any given time, and his career is undoubtedly more typical of Canadians than we normally recognize.

Academic conferences seldom produce good books, because the quality and approaches of the individual participants are too variable. But occasionally one of these meetings really does gel, and such was the case with the symposium held at Fort St. John on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Alaska Highway. Unfortunately missing, at least from the programme, were any of the Earl Gingrichs who had actually done the work of construction, but otherwise there was a reasonable representation of disciplines and interests, all focussing on a single topic from various perspectives. The Alcan Highway has generated a surprising amount of mythology over the years, and the participants do a good job of setting the record straight. The project was a classic in Canadian-American relations. The Canadians were hesitant to get on with it

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because they feared the Americans would use it for strategic purposes, and the Americans backed off because they could not see any strategic uses to which it would be put. In the end, the Highway was built under military auspices but without any strong military rationale. Moreover, as several of the participants document, the work of the American Army's Corps of Engineers beginning in 1942 did not produce a useable road; the Canadian contribution put the highway into operation. Nevertheless, the Highway offers an important focal point for understanding Canadian-American relations during the Second World War, and perhaps more significantly still, the implications of northern development in a great variety of areas. These papers are heavily academic in approach, but well worth reading by anyone at all interested in northern history. They demonstrate, moreover, the ways in which that northern history can be integrated into larger themes.

All the books already considered have in common a concern with geographically peripheral regions of Canada, and most were produced, at least in part, by non-academics, and published by regional presses. *Canada, 1900-1945,* on the other hand, concentrates on an overview of the nation in a critical period. It has been written by three distinguished Canadian scholars and published by our major university press. Following on the same authors' highly acclaimed *Canada Since 1945*, this volume is cast in the same mold, although some attempt has been made to reduce the obvious hostility to the provinces of the earlier volume, and to cut down as well the tone of flippancy that prevailed there. In their preface, the authors insist that thrusting the latest research in social and economic history "upon the general audience and our students is professionally self-indulgent and, for most of these readers, exasperating." They prefer their students and readers "to transcend 'everyday life' and recognize how much that life is determined 'by the state and concrete developments in state, economy, and society.' " (p. ix)

As its authors suggest, *Canada, 1900-1945* has not only been written on a grand scale, but at a level of abstraction from the realities of everyday life. The book represents an excellent statement of the academic elitist/idealist philosophy, focussing on that greatest of all Canadian abstractions, the nation-state itself, and is populated with few living creatures except leading politicians and literary figures, whose work is nicely employed in the text to point up major points. The point of view is from the olympian heights (?) of Ottawa, peering outward, and the farthest reaches of this vast country are understandably hard to find from such a perspective. Well-written and well-crafted, based upon solid research, this book is an important synthesis of its chosen field of coverage, the mainstream of traditional Canadian historiography. Whether or not the authors are correct that what students and general readers want — or need — is this sort of idealist abstractionism is another matter entirely. The view from the other worlds of publishing certainly suggests other interpretations of public interest.

While certainly not a "historical dinosaur," *Canada, 1900-1945* plainly comes out of a tradition that many might doubt is any longer "the mainstream." In the long run, which of the books under review represents "the mainstream" and which are on "the periphery" is, I suspect, a matter still to be decided.

J.M. Bumsted is Professor of History, St. John's College, University of Manitoba.

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THE PACKET

In reply to John Moore of Udora Ontario. (*The Beaver* April/May):

Having mushed dogs for a few years myself, I have been of the opinion that "Mush" was a native contortion of the French word "marche", and with "Cheu and Chaw" and contortion of "Gee and Haw" used by some. "Hi-Hiya" was used for more acceleration, steming from "Here, Here you". As "Ashtum" for "Come" in Cree, for often as not the musher either went ahead or had someone breaking trail and "Stay" was what I mostly used instead of "Whoa".

If the sleigh got snagged, to back up was mostly man-power assisted by the guy-rope (guide-line fastened to the curve of the toboggan) and often a frustrated "back-up" or "easy-off", which was amazingly quickly understood by the "wheel dog" (the one on the sleigh end of the dog train), the often forgotten but the most valued dog on the team. With a good "lead dog" and his co-worker the "wheel-dog" that worked at dodging the snags and trees of an overland trail you had it made. When the going was tough some of the encouraging words were not printable, but they did produce more effort and more speed.

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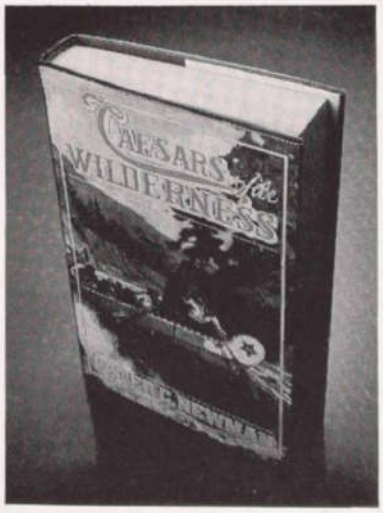

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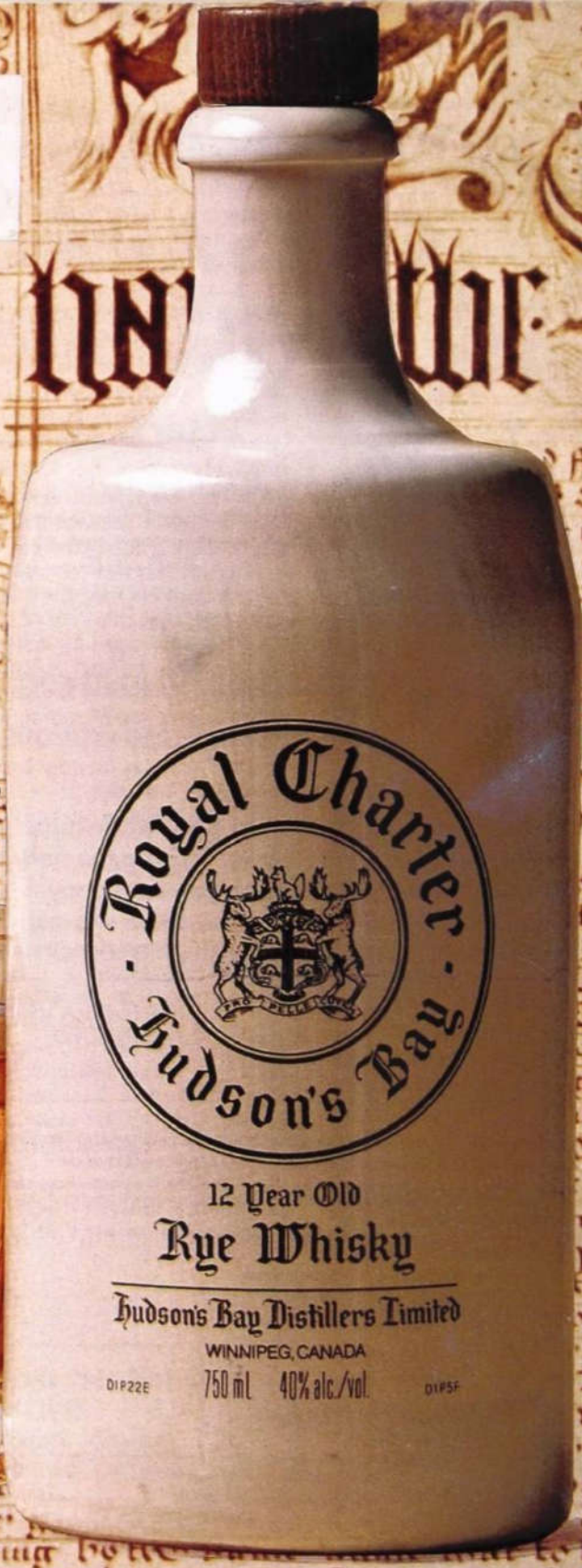

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